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The Faithless Favorite.

A Mixed Tragedy.



DEDICATED

To the memory of things beautiful:—
The ghosts of dead dreams and failures—
 Things that have never come,
And things that have grown in vain.

THE FAITHLESS FAVORITE

A Mixed Tragedy

BY
EDWIN SAUTER

To which is appended a collection
of detached trifles
entitled
SCHEDIASM

NUMBERED FIRST EDITION

SAINT LOUIS
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ADVERTISEMENT.

In the following drama the author adheres merely to the fundamental fact of the old chroniclers' stories of Athelwold and Elfrida, allowing caprice and fancy to build up the rest.

The names of historical personages are taken from Hume's *England*.

The author is indebted to his indulgent friend—the play's first reader—Dr. L. G. McKellops, for assistance in preparing the volume for the press.

THE FAITHLESS FAVORITE.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE.

EDGAR, *King of England.*

ATHELSTAN, *a powerful noble.*

KENRIC,
REDWALD, } *thanes,—rival suitors to Elfrida.*

DUNSTAN, *Archbishop of Canterbury.*

ALFRED, *friend to Athelwold.*

OLGAR, *Earl of Devonshire,—father of Elfrida.*

OFFA, *a wicked monk.*

HAKO, *a robber,—brother to Rowena.*

INA, *steward to Olgar.*

INULF, *a minstrel.*

ATHELWOLD, *son to Athelstan and favorite of the King.*

ELFRIDA, *a Saxon beauty, afterwards Queen.*

COUNTESS OF DEVONSHIRE.

ROWENA, *clandestinely married to Athelwold.*

ELFWINE, *maid to Elfrida.*

OSBURGA, *a reputed witch, living in a cave.*

RODA, *her daughter.*

Prologue, kings, thanes, outlaws, soldiers, officers, monks, players, pages, an old Saxon, three Romanies, keepers, servants, villagers, peasants, priest, old sentry, and attendants.

SCENE,—Saxon England.



AC**T** I.



PROLOGUE.

Enter PROLOGUE in a fool's costume, with cap and bells.

PROL.

Hear ME, good people. What is dark is not light,—what is plain, not ambiguous. I am an EXPLAINEE,—the world's interpreter of parables and dark sayings. Now mark:—

A certain king, well loved by monkish chroniclers, with a sweet-tooth for a "fat leg of ewe-mutton," hearing on all sides great praises of a piece of rare excellence in Devonshire, becomes infected with a deep and mighty passion and appetite for it; and, occasion soon after offering, dispatches his favorite thither to make purchase of the ewe, provided reports lied not respecting its comeliness and succulence.

The favorite, viewing the piece, lusteth mightily like his master; and encouraged by an evil shepherd that accompanied him—who, opportunely or inopportunely, gave occasion for the visit—he makes the purchase, indeed, but alas! in his own name, not his master's.

This injurious deed, an act of treachery to the king, and furthermore, as will be shortly seen, in violation of a solemn league and covenant he, the favorite, had recently entered into clandestinely to eat no mutton save in his own cote, directly led to many calamities and disas-

trous consequences, and eventually to his own death at the king's instigation.

But, what ho!—the disastrous consequences and cognate circumstances are vividly set forth and portrayed in the free-lance, connection-scoring and farraginous manner of the Elizabethian school in the play next-ensuing:—a drama consisting of five acts and thirty odd scenes, whereof the first, or impetus to the *motif*, sheweth the violent admiration, passion and deadly rivalry of the Saxon youth respecting the Devonshire mutton; and the thirty-fifth and last (amen!), the deplorable end of the favorite and others concerned at a merry feast where the King unexpectedly appears and claims the piece in contention.

Alas!

Now, Mr. Curtain-puller.

[*Exit PROLOGUE.*

ACT I.

ACT I, SCENE I.—A forest adjoining ATHELSTAN'S castle.—*Horns and hunting music, hallooing and shouting, break upon the ear—first as from a little distance, but rapidly growing louder and coming nearer. Soon a confused crowd of Saxon nobles in hunting costume, armed with knives and spears, dash across the scene. Presently enter ATHELSTAN, limping.*

ATH.

Halloo, halloo, halloo!—

Swift as the hawk they rush the frightened quarry,
But 'tis a scurvy trick of graceless youth
To leave eld i' the lurch and in distress. (*seats himself*)

Ay, ay;—

Halloo, 'loo, 'loo and welcome,
Ye merry, lusty, lithe and shin-whole thanes!—
Wise age respects its hamstrings.

As for me, farewell boar-sticking! (*throws away his spear*)

Joints wrenched, crowns cracked, flesh bramble-torn—

Those pleasures of the chase—and sundry others—

Have thrilled these stagnant veins some three-score years,—

No more of them!

Man smiles away a thousand aches at play,
But dub it work—one bruise will quell his spirit.
Zounds! I have seen the day—who comes?
By Thor! (*rising*) I hear the ring of steel.

Enter REDWALD and KENRIC, fighting.

RED.

Thy blood!—thy heart's blood!

KEN.

Fight, fight, tongue-trumpet!

[Beats down REDWALD'S defense and runs him through the arm—REDWALD falls.

ATH.

Hold!

KEN. (*raising his spear*)

Thou diest!

ATH. (*interposing*)

Hold, Kenric,—hold, I charge thee!

Slay him not.

KEN. (*struggling*)

Away! Away!

Unhand me, thou old thane!—His life—or—
(menacing ATH.) thine!

ATH. (*persisting*)

Fierce youth, forbear!

[KENRIC flings ATH. aside and rushes on REDWALD—Enter KING EDGAR and party, —they seize KENRIC and disarm him.

KING EDGAR.

Ha, nobles—speak!—what bodes this savage fray?

Bind up that bleeding arm! (REDWALD'S arm is bandaged)

Thou too, hoary Athelstan?

ATH. (*peevishly*)

Nay, blame me not, O King!

Sooth, I was wounded in the chase and sought

A friendly brook to lave my maimed limbs,—
Here scarce arrived, methought to rest awhile,
When suddenly there burst upon the scene
Yon furious pair, (*pointing*) engaged in mortal
combat;—
The startled copse loud-ringing with the clash
Of desperate lunge and deadly counterstroke:—
And when to curb their violence I essayed
Athelstan was like a feather i' the whirlpool:—
This told, thou sharest all my knowledge.

KING EDGAR. (*sinks on a fallen oak and sighs*)
Thanes, thanes!
Life's a short, troubled voyage on an ocean—
That vast, illcharted waste whose shores are
Death;
And wildly tossed,—oft overwhelmed
And midway wrecked,—
On, on! relentless fate the rocking bark
Fast drives,—while heedless wretches, drunk or
sleeping,
Or like the child at play,
Infatuate with some caprice of the moment,
Reck not of perils nor th' inevitable end;
But with their little souls absorbed in little
things
Unto the eleventh hour,
Bowed o'er some game they dream,—till, all
aghast,
Dire thunders on their ears the cry of PORT!
And then pell-mell they bundle off despairing,
Ere well the voyage seems to them begun.
Ah me!
How soon it ends—the longest life and best!—

With all its petty pangs, disports and projects;
 How soon in blank oblivion swallowed up,
 Despite carved records, monuments and memo-
 rials!

Our port's illimitable oblivion,—
 Ay, Time's long surges break upon a shore
 Athwart whose gloom no beacon beams or cheers:
 Oh, madness then, to fill the fleeting hour
 With idle brawls!—My malison on strife.

KEN. (*sullenly*)

Thou ruler of the isle of Albion,
 Peace-loving kings won not the sea-girt realm,
 And strife, I rede thee, is the fining-pot
 'Twixt man and man, nation and nation,
 Distinguishing true metal from base dross.

ATH. (*sotto*)

Character, boy,—that's the gold in the coin:
 An inch of character's worth a yard of wit.

KING EDGAR. (*harshly to KENRIC*)

What, thou churl!
 A gruff voice sings i' the pitch of truth,
 But there be forks to bring it in tune,
 Look you, Lord Fining-pot!

ATH. (*aside to KEN.*)

Now down, rash fool!
 The lion shows his fangs, but prompt submission
 Soon pacifies him.

KEN. (*kneeling*)

Pardon, liege lord!
 Intemperate anger wags a privileged tongue.

KING EDGAR (*motioning him up*)

Yea,—if the cause be righteous:—
 Is thine so?

RED. (*advancing excitedly*)

No, no!—hear me—believe him not, just King!

KEN. (*mockingly*)

Hear him?—thou'l hear the madman rave, just King!

KING EDGAR (*sternly*)

Peace, Kenric.

RED.

Hear me and render justice, righteous Edgar!

'Twas in these woods I lost a jeweled ring,

More dear, O King, than my heart's blood to me:

Who found it?—Kenric—

He, he, he! (*pointing*)

Deny it not!—that guilty flush betrays thee.

Prince, when I taxed him with the gem's possession,

Demanding its return,

He, my rejected, disappointed rival,

Knowing full well whose bless'd hand gave it me,

And the tradition that who gained this prize

Should wed the maid,—most harshly scorned me,

Denying restitution just and equitable.

Then to the arbitrament of arms, though loth,

I swift appealed to win again mine own—

The precious gift of beautiful Elfrida.

SEVERAL YOUNG NOBLES IN CHORUS.

Elfrida! Elfrida!

RED. (*triumphantly*)

Ay! mark me, the Lady Elfrida,

Heiress of Devonshire.

KEN.

Thou simple fellow!—I have not thy bauble.

RED.

An oath, an oath! Avouch it with an oath!

KING EDGAR (*presenting his sword*)

Swear on this hilt thy lips speak sooth, Earl Kenric.

KEN. (*kissing it*)

I swear it.

KING EDGAR (*to RED.*)

What ask'st thou more?

[As RED. is about to reply advance ATH. hastily.

ATH.

Odso, odso!

A woman 'tis ye quarrel o'er?—Oh, egregious!

Lord, here's the acme of mischievous vanity!

The plague its thousands—yea—but in all ages—

And at all ages—Woman slays her ten thousands:—

Hero, king, poet, plough-boy, sage and scholar—

None escape her, messieurs,—none, none, none!

And what is woman?—Bah!

A golden-winged butterfly, indeed,

Flutt'ring in the air before the lover's eyes,

Dazzled with longing,

But in the hands of disillusioned husbands

An ugly and oft venomous little grub:—

And let them speak who know the change when caught.

CHORUS OF YOUNG NOBLES.

Fy, fy!—hear him!

CHORUS OF OLD ONES.

Ha, ha, ha!

Scene I.

THE FAITHLESS FAVORITE.

ATH.

By your leave! (*sings*)

Once the maid weds the man let him sing if he
can,

When a year they've sped together,
That a railing wife's not the bane of life—
And the devil send him foul weather.

KING EDGAR.

Tut, tut, biting Athelstan!

Nature's promptings be wise counselors,
And scathless fall gibes and jingles on deaf
ears:—

Are we not all lovers in England?

YOUNG NOBLES.

All, all;—huzza!

ATH.

Nay, 'tis indeed our thriving industry,—
Strange lands know that. But God help ye!—
If ye see not the truth of wise words,
I leave your correction to th' rod of experience.

KING EDGAR (*drawing figures with his sword*)

But who is Elfrida?

SEVERAL VOICES.

A goddess! A goddess!

KEN.

Oh, a being fair whom all devoutly worship
In Beauty's idolatrous temple,—where fond
hearts

Are altars, and the groans of noble youth
Thrice-welcome incense!

ATH. (*aside*)

And mooning madness high-priest, faith!

RED.

How tamely, gods! ye do discuss Elfrida,
 The paragon of loveliness,
 Of grace, of virtue, and the pride
 And glory of her sex!
 Where she appeareth, like the brilliant sun,
 Her brightness all irradiates,
 And gloom and darkness from the face of care
 Fall like a mantle:—
 And when she speaks—O nightingales, be mute!
 For your most dulcet notes are dissonance
 To the soft syllables which, from her lips,
 Trill like a siren's melody.

[Exit.]

ATH.

A pretty canticle that, of exaggeration!
 Not unsung in pristine times,
 When the first ogling maid taugut the prime fool
 That dulcet and pernicious practice—loving.
 Love's a drought to wit and rants in stock-
 phrases.

A NOBLE.

Redwald takes unceremonious leave, my liege.

KING EDGAR (*waking from a reverie*)

Oh! he is gone?

Alas! he is distraught and must be humored:
 Then let him hence,—sick fancy buys him leave.

ATH. (*impatiently*)

Declining twilight warns us hence too, King,—
 If thou wilt pardon an old man's interruption.

KING EDGAR (*rising*)

We'll to thy castle straightway.

Kenric, impetuous spirits dance on a precipice,

And for slight cause plunge headlong into crime;
 For thine own weal, and condign punishment,
 Thou shalt abroad:
 One year thou hast to wend on other shores,
 But welcome back when time hath healed this
 feud.

KEN. (*indifferently*)

The King's will is the subject's law perforce.

KING EDGAR.

Blow, trumpets, blow!
 Blow that the absent huntsmen come apace
 With hounds, with steeds, and eke the noble
 quarry.

Sound, sound! (*flourish of horns*)
 Naught answers save the distant mocking echo,
 And we'll not wait man's pleasure. On, thanes,
 on!

ATH.

Nay, will ye go? Kenric, thine arm;—
 Rogue, had I not been disabled! [Exeunt.

Enter ATHELWOLD hastily.

ATHELW.

Perish all laggards! (*some drops of rain fall*)

*Haste too late is all in vain:
 Though they trudge and stride amain
 Laggards house behind the rain.*

Surely the horns issued from this self-same
 copse,
 Theugh the King's vanished like a jack-o-lantern.
 What's here? (*picks up an object*) Old forest,
 bring'st me treasure?—

The flashing gewgaw of some coxcomb hunter!—
I'll pocket it. (*hunting music*) Hark! again.

[Exit.]

ACT I, SCENE II.—The banquet-hall in ATHELSTAN'S castle.—KING EDGAR, ATHELSTAN, ATHELWOLD, DUNSTAN, etc., *discovered at the board*.—*Trophies of the chase here and there.*
Festal music.

ATH. (to ATTEND.)

Have the jugglers come?

ATTEND.

No, my lord.

ATH.

Hang the dogs! Where tarry they?

ATTEND.

Truly, I know not, my lord. Old Inulf, the gleeman that was once a French monk, hath just run in with a company of players, and tells of robbers in the woods. Belike the jugglers encountered them and met with misadventure.

ATH.

Robbers in the woods?—Ay! in the woods, the town, and in the castle. But of that anon. Call this Inulf. [Exit. ATTEND.

HAKO enters and seats himself unobserved amongst the nobles.

KING EDGAR.

Marry, Athelstan!

A frowning host points the guest towards the door:

Why that troubled visage?

ATH.

'Tis naught, noble Prince,—naught, naught.

*Re-enter ATTEND. with INULF.*Sirrah harper!—Chant us a war-ballad or a song
of the chase. (*aside*) 'Twill save us from miscel-
laneous caterwauling, at all events.*

INULF.

Blithely, your lordship.

[*Tunes his harp.*

KING EDGAR.

Hast none of the new things in thy scrip, glee-
man?

INULF.

Gracious sovereign, we are e'en versed in a nov-
elty of mine own dealing with the slaying of the
werewolf. It is in advance of the times, my lord,
I make bold to say. [To ATH.

ATH.

A play?

INULF.

In miniature, my lord—better than a monkish
diversion, truly.

ATH.

Come, come!—prepare apace, then.

INULF.

Gentles all, consider yourselves on a highway
near a village at dusk, and the wolf a monstrous
big animal;—or aught superstition paints him.[*Exit.*

*It was the custom at all Saxon feasts to pass the harp from guest to guest, exacting a song from each participant. Caedmon's chagrin over his inability to sustain his part at a banquet, and the subsequent marvelous happenings, are well known to all students of literary biography.

ATH.

Fill the cups, rogues!—fill the cups.

[ATTENDANTS *fetch drinking-cups made out
of skulls and fill them.**

DUNSTAN (*rising*)

Lords! ye have quaffed the King's health—
Drink ye this to his master!

KING EDGAR.

Zounds! Dunstan, what call you this pledge?

DUNSTAN.

'Tis called the pledge of skulls, O King!
And the toast is—TO THE WORM.

[*Raises his cup and recites:*—

DUNSTAN'S TOAST.

*Fill a cup to the King,
Forget not thy host,
But let the feast bring
Ne triumph or boast.
Deep, deep in the earth
Thy cold lord is crawling,
And gay is his mirth—
Sith blithesome his calling.
Ho! he feasts on the heart
Of humanity's kings,*

*The use of drinking cups made out of human skulls, especially of their enemies, was common enough among our savage ancestors. The story of Alboin, King of the Lombards, and Rosamond, daughter of the conquered Cunimund, will probably recur to the reader's memory;—forced to pledge Alboin in the skull of her own father, she avenged the atrocity by stabbing the King to the heart.

*And his revels are part
And the end of all things.
His hosts are the dead,
His reign—'tis for aye,—
And all come to his spread,—
But none fare away.*

[DUNSTAN *empties his goblet,—the rest following suit, noisily and boisterously jesting the while.*

KING EDGAR (*flinging his skull on the board*)

Ho, ho, ho!
A mortal truth but a ghastly pledge,
Dark prelate.

ATH.

Faugh!—the night's chilly.

DUNSTAN (*re-seating himself*)

Lo! the players.

[*Here the Interlude.—An arras or curtain may be thrown back, disclosing suitable scenery.*

Enter INULF and a young SHEPHERDESS, running.

SHEP.

He comes, he comes!—the werewolf comes!—
woe, woe!*

*Oh, save me, Christ!—Oh. Jesu—Mary—save me!
I'm lost, lost, lost!—No further can I flee—*

*The werewolf appears in the folk-lore of many countries. A story of a prodigiously big beast, that none but the King himself could slay, is related in some apocryphal histories of King Edgar. His activity in extirpating wolves from England is cited by all historians. It is, perhaps, needless to state that the mythical or legendary feature is ignored in this interlude.

*My limbs sink under me—I faint—I fall—
(drops)*

Oh,—oh,—oh,—oh!

*Gape, kindly earth!—gape wide and hide my
corse.*

INULF.

*He rushes on with mighty bounds—O horrible!
O piteous sight!—a mangled, bloody babe
Hangs from his gleaming fangs!
His fiery eyes strike terror to my soul—
He foams—he snarls in rage like rumbling thunder!*

Mine eyes grow dim,—I can no longer see.

[Falls prone and covers his head with his mantle.

KING EDGAR.

Excellent! Excellent!—A most tragic caitiff.

ATH.

Ay, by the fiends!—he knows the coward's part:
He hath rehearsed it in real life, most likely.

KING EDGAR.

What!—already?

Enter a PLAYER impersonating the KING,
with the werewolf's head on his shoulders.

KING (prodding INULF with his foot)

What craven bird is this that hides its head,
But leaves its heart exposed in witless dread?

INULF (starting up)

That beast!—that beast!—Majestic lord, beware.

KING.

Unscathed young hinds may gambol in his lair.

[Flings the head at INULF's feet.

INULF.

God!—is the fell, devouring monster slain?

KING.

Behold his poll!—and hide thine own again.

[*Kicking the caput.*

INULF.

Joy! Joy!—The sheepcote's safe and hamlet dear.

KING.

*Ay!—dance and shout—thou late wast blanched
with fear.*

INULF.

Unarmed the beast surprised me on my way.

KING.

Sooth!—gentle harper, hadst no weapon, say?

INULF.

Naught save two hands and this, my gilded harp.

KING.

Pooh, pooh!—exchange that for a falchion sharp.

[*A shout.*

*Enter a crowd of VILLAGERS, SHEPHERDS
and SHEPHERDESSES, dragging in the
body of the wolf, which they kick lustily,
dancing and shouting round the KING.—
INULF, seizing his harp, sings:—*

SONG.

*When the bold king and the wild thane
Follow the chase i' wood or plain,
Let prowling wolf and shaggy bear,
And tusked, fierce and bristling boar,
Crouch low and tremble in the lair!—
Crouch low as Britons crouched of yore*

*When, conquered, from the wailing field
The routed hosts for refuge fled,
And, long in caverns* deep concealed,
Shunned conflict with the Saxon dread.—*

[He varies the measure.]

*High beats the heart in the wild thane
When he bestrides a foeman slain,—
Or, first to spear the panting boar,
Drinks the red, quick-welling gore!—
But answer, swains!—who leads the van,
Or be the game wild beast or man?*

CHORUS.

*Foremost in chase, foremost in battle,
Where spears flash and bucklers rattle
The Saxon monarch takes his stand,
And earns by might right to command:—
Conforming to the ancient plan,
Which crowned the hero of the clan,—
'Twas thus monarchic rule began.*

[*The guests take up this chorus, clashing their cups against the dishes by way of accompaniment.*

THE SHEPHERDESS.

Have done with thy lame numbers!—Let me finish it. [Seizing the harp she sings:—

SONG.

*To the music of the trembling string
Chant the true praises of the King:—*

*The fastnesses in the mountains of Cornwall and Wales were the final refuge of many of the Britons beaten in almost all their campaigns with the Anglo-Saxons.

Scene II.

THE FAITHLESS FAVORITE.

*Ten thousand thanes at his command
Wage bloody war with ruthless hand—
Ay! but he, renowned for peace,*
Bade the trumpet's clangor cease,
Bade the mourner's voice be stilled,
Bade the fruitful fields be tilled,
Where the croaking raven, flitting,
And the vulture, grimly sitting,
Gorge their carrion maw no more:—
For the page of England's story,
Teeming with the warrior's glory,
Is turned down for one less gory,—
And the troubrous days are o'er.*

ANOTHER (taking the harp)

*And ah! since so decreed above,
Triumphant valor bends to love,
And in the sparkling ee
Of golden-tressed virginity—*

KING.

*Break off, break off! God wot, we ken its spell!
Good villeins all!—play catch—and so farewell.*

[Scatters largess and exit attended by INULF.
*After lively scrambling, struggling and bickering, exeunt omnes shouting as before:—
which ends the Interlude.*

ATH.

O admirable King!

There's for thy seasonable interruption.

[*Throws a jeweled brooch in a tray.*

*King Edgar (959-975) was called the "Peaceful," his reign being signalized by no great wars, not even with the Danes.

KING EDGAR.

There's for the harper.

[Throws a bracelet.]

ATHELW.

There too.—That play hath verisimilitude
Where the characters show discretion.*[Contributes the ring he found in the woods.
Other nobles follow suit, and soon the tray is
full of glittering jewels.]*KING EDGAR (*calling*)

Inulf! Inulf!—come.

Re-enter INULF.

ATH. (*pointing*)There's for your pains;—but hark thou,
The brooch to him that played king.HAKO (*springs forward*)

And the whole tray to Hako!

*[Seizes it, bowls over INULF and exit. All rise
in confusion.]*

CHORUS.

A robber! A robber!

ATH.

Ho, sentinels!—ho, archers! Seize him, seize
him!*[Rushes out, followed by the company.—DUN-
STAN keeps his seat, laughing and playing
with the worm.]*

A CRY FROM WITHIN.

He has escaped! He has escaped! [Scene closes.]

ACT I, SCENE III.—London.—A room in the royal palace.—KING EDGAR present, with several tributary kings, their trains, courtiers, etc.

KING EDGAR.

Cousin of Mercia, say,—or ill or well,
How fares it with the Boroughs?*

FIRST KING.

Peace reigns, law triumphs, and the half-shorn Dane

Follows the plow, forgetful of the Raven.†

KING EDGAR.

'Tis well.

SECOND KING.

Royal and puissant Edgar!—grant a boon.

KING EDGAR.

Ask it.

SEC. KING.

Come dwell with me in Albin.

KING EDGAR.

In Albin?

SEC. KING.

Ay!—in Albin—

There the maids are fresh and fair, and little wont

To leave young, doughty kings content to roam

*The "Five Boroughs," strongholds of the Danes, were Derby, Lincoln, Leicester, Stamford and Nottingham.

†The "Raven,"—the standard of the Danes in King Alfred's time,—viewed with superstitious reverence by the fierce harriers of the North. It was fabled to possess miraculous properties, always bringing victory when carried in battle, because worked by the hands of the daughters of King Lodbrog.

Unspoused and lorn: *—a state which some p—d
lords

Cross a wide waste of waters to escape from—
Not naming other advantages of the cure.

KING EDGAR.

Go to, go to!

SEC. KING.

Nay, beshrew me, King!

I pity thee:—thy ill-warmed couch cries shame
On all the lagging dames of merry England.

KING EDGAR.

Gramercy, Kenneth!—gramercy. (*aside*) Ill-
warmed,

Forsooth!

SEC. KING.

Ah, well!—th' inevitable rules us:—

Belike the English soil, malign and sterile,
Breeds naught that kicks its way beneath a
smock

Save holy nuns, and unhipped spinsterhood.

KING EDGAR.

Tush, man!—oft holy nuns are young and charm-
ing.

SEC. KING.

E'en here? E'en here?

Now, by my halidom! I doubt it not,—

Nay, nay!

Discerning shavelings will look well to that,—
For, like the best of ruttish masculinity,

*King Edgar was unmarried at this period, though living with Elfeda, his favorite mistress, according to Hume, till he married Eifrida.

With most lascivious sith forbidden relish
 They con each pleasing bulge and curve of con-
 tour
 That marks fair woman dedicate to maternity—
 For all their beads, and psalms, and groaning
 penances!

Heigh-ho!—solitude, thy joys soon cloy.

KING EDGAR.

Impious Scot! Art not ashamed?

SEC. KING (*pursuing his bent*)

Go to,—egad!—thou know'st full well—who bet-
 ter?—

That in all nunn'ries there be eyes and legs
 May make cold monks forget their prayers—and
 chastity.

Kings are sometimes tempted.

KING EDGAR.

Bluff Kenneth, when there's honey in the hive
 High convent walls are not impregnable:^{*}
 And men were made to use their opportunities.
 Ha, ha, ha!

CHORUS OF COURTIERS IN BACKGROUND.

Ha, ha, ha!

SEC. KING (*to FIRST*)

Alfear, methinks those roving, beady eyes,
 Which 'neath redundant brows gaze half ex-
 tinguished
 From thy nose-dominated face,
 Turn darkly on us.—Speak!
 What growl'st thou in thy beard?

*Edgar, so highly lauded by the cowled chroniclers, was actually guilty of breaking into a convent and carrying off Editha, a nun, to be his concubine.

FIRST KING.

That Kenneth lies.

SEC. KING (*his hand to his sword*)

How, lies?—Death, villain!

FIRST KING (*ditto, advancing*)

Most impudently lies, thou babbling tarn!

Slandering religion and our womanhood.

[Both draw.]

KING EDGAR.

Sheathe swords, sheathe swords, ye turbulent
kings!

This in the presence?

SEC. KING (*sheathing*)

Well, well!

He doth proclaim himself of meager wit
Who draws his blade in dudgeon o'er a jest.

FIRST KING (*ditto*)

What!

Thy plaided wenches with be-porridged chaps
Compare with Freya's children? Flippant Pict,
I tell thee, though thou searchedst all the stars
That gleam in Orion's baldric, thou couldst never
Find peer to our Earl Olgar's daughter.

KING EDGAR.

Ha!

SEC. KING.

Nay, I have done. Discretion pens my thoughts
Safe under bolt and key: intemperance rages.

[Turns away.*]

*This is hardly an injustice to King Kenneth:—his disposition to talk more than he would maintain is instanced in the story about King Edgar when the latter took him to task in the wood for his jest about his—King Edgar's—stature. *

FIRST KING.

'Fore God, well done!

Bolt fast that tongue lest ignorance break gaol.

KING EDGAR.

A truce, a truce! The strife grows wearisome.
What have we now?

Enter DUNSTAN.

DUNSTAN.

Saint Peter smite the sacrilegious hilding!

SEC. KING.

'Sblood!

KING EDGAR.

How now, Dunstan?

DUNSTAN.

King! for thy private ear and present audience
I have a tale of most abhorrent villainy.

KING EDGAR (*smiling*)

Nay, is it so? We'll give it audience, Abbot:—
(turns to others)

Good Princes, grant us leave and we anon
Will make amends with sumptuous entertain-
ment.

Kenneth, some jests break bones,—keep that in
mind;

And thou, good Alfear, learn to smile at raillery.

[*Exeunt KING EDGAR and DUNSTAN.—*
Scene ends.

ACT I, SCENE IV.—Another room in the same.—
KING EDGAR *leaning negligently against a window.*

*Enter DUNSTAN and OFFA.**

DUNSTAN.

Behold!

KING EDGAR (*impatiently*)

Cowl;—cowl and cassock, nothing else, Archbishop.

DUNSTAN (*throwing back OFFA'S hood*)

What seest thou now?

KING EDGAR.

Why, a man—

Cry you mercy—no!—a monk—that wears shame-faced

A livid scar athwart each chap, which somewhat Mars his swart visage,—Mass, he hath no need To make the sign o' the cross at his devotions! For he hath two in's face—one on each cheek.

DUNSTAN (*sternly*)

Coldly thou jestest, monarch!—though the heart Of priesthood bled when violence dealt this blow.

KING EDGAR.

Heyday, heyday!—our birthright that, good Dunstan.

*In the chronicle the ostensible object of Athelwold's visit to Olgar is given as being to look after certain military marches or boundaries, supposedly in danger from an incursion of Danes. But as the play needed a villain, as well as an object for the visit, the author thought here to kill two birds with one stone.

DUNSTAN.

The priest is privileged, for his sacred person
Is the faith's temple:—wherefore mere indigni-
ties
In others are, when visited on a priest,
Atrocious crimes, and cry to Heav'n for ven-
geance.

KING EDGAR.

Then to the purpose, Abbot:—who hath wrought
This grievous injury?

DUNSTAN.

Olgar.

KING EDGAR. (*aside*)

That name again!—the man blessed with a
daughter—
There's sorcery in the theme.

DUNSTAN.

Who harbors evil-doers or protects
Thereby transfers their guilt to his own shoul-
ders:—

What an the servant smote him?—
He goes unpunished through his master's favor,
This self-same Olgar, Earl of Devonshire—
Wherefore Lord Olgar,—whom I here arraign
Culprit in chief, not mere accessory, look you—
Incurs full odium for the hellish crime.

KING EDGAR.

Thou reasonest most subtly, learned prelate.

(*aside*)

O chance! how wonderfully dost thou gibe
Occasion to our purposes.

DUNSTAN.

Offa, each fact and circumstance relate
Of the fell outrage.

OFFA.

Alas! Alas! [Wrings his hands, etc.

DUNSTAN.

See, how the holy man
Weeps to bring accusation!

OFFA.

Venerable Archbishop, and renowned Prince,
I freely do forgive mine enemies
Like Christ;—like him renounce all vengeance.

DUNSTAN.

Woe to the malefactors! Church and State
Shall them aread their harshest penalties.

OFFA.

Nay!—under your gracious favor, the poor priest
Will hence and leave them unindicted.

KING EDGAR.

Not so, not so, sir priest!—thou shalt recount,
We do command thee—and that most minutely—
How thou cam'st by this same disfigurement.

DUNSTAN.

The priest's cause is Religion's, and the Church
Hath in his wrongs more injury than himself.

OFFA.

Oh, I am moved by that appeal!—though loth
For mine own sake to bring destruction on
HER enemies—though richly they deserve it.

[With venom.

KING EDGAR. (*impatiently*)

Come, monk!—unbosom thyself.

OFFA.

Know then, that Olgar hath an hoary steward
 Hight Ina, who has ta'en in his senectitude
 A young wife and a comely.—Well-a-way!
 Age brings no sapience to jealous fools.
 But thus it chanced:—in a most fatal moment
 She falling sick, unhaply sent for me
 To minister unto her in her illness
 According to my priestly offices;—
 Comforting her fears one evening, and at parting
 Laying my chaste hands on her bosom thus,
 And bowing down my head to breathe upon her
 The holy benediction,—in rushed Ina,
 And with outrageous, sacrilegious words—
 Charging his priest with sinful liberties—
 Dragged ME—austere, devout and innocent!—
 Forth by the heels, and cruelly with his dagger
 Smote me, O God! (*weeps*) And thus, forever-
 more
 Scarred and disfigured, shall the hapless priest
 Wander the earth, exposed to scoff and jeer,
 As Ina vowed I should be—as a warning,
 So he declared, unto all priests like me:
 Wherefore he spared my life.

[*Bows down his head and weeps amain.*

DUNSTAN (*raising his hand in imprecation*)

Strike him with palsy, Christ!
 Living or dying, if his lips blaspheme
 Thy name in prayers for mercy.

KING EDGAR (*coldly*)

Thou hast had some ill-usage, but methinks
 Olgar's connection is not yet apparent;—

Known privileges, 'tis true, were scarce respected!

OFFA.

Concealed by Olgar, Ina foils the law.

KING EDGAR (*with alacrity*)

Hah!—then shall we direct a messenger
Despatch unto him, charged with our command
To yield up Ina to the magistrates,
And likewise prompt the latter to their duty.

[*He is agitated.*

DUNSTAN.

And bills of excommunication thou
Shalt bear for both:—if Olgar prove recalcitrant—

But all events for Ina.

OFFA (*aside*)

Faith! I have somewhat overshot the mark.

KING EDGAR.

Lord Athelwold shall be our envoy;—him
Thou canst accompany, monk.

OFFA (*aside*)

*Who spurs too hard betimes,
May ride too far betimes.**

DUNSTAN.

Bate not a moment:—forth upon the journey,
And I will furnish needful funds and documents.

KING EDGAR.

Abbot, bid Athelwold attend. [*Exit DUNSTAN.*

OFFA (*kneeling*)

Most gracious sovereign!

I do beseech thee, let me bear thy message—

*Suggested by "he tires betimes that spurs too fast betimes."

Mass! it doth ill beseem a noble earl
 To leave his pleasures for an humble priest,
 When one may bear the twofold instrument—
 This from the Church, the other from the State—
 Which shall, without great argument, constrain
 The quaking subject to grant speedy redress
 To me—how wronged, but oh!—how prone to
 pardon.

KING EDGAR (*drumming*)

He speaks!

OFFA.

Upon his knees the priest implores the boon.

KING EDGAR.

Oh!—thou art kneeling—rise!

[OFFA does so.]

Re-enter DUNSTAN with ATHELWOLD.

Abbot, I prithee, take thy follower hence,
 And presently Earl Athelwold shall join him.

[*Exeunt DUNSTAN and OFFA.*]

Welcome, my heart! (*the KING embraces ATHELW.*)

How are thy spirits?—Nay, I need not ask:—
 For in thine eye the soul of content beams,
 And thou canst know no dumps whose every
 mood

Of being's but a phase of happiness.

Oh! on that brow, so fair, so smooth, so open,
 May never guilt, desire or foiled ambition
 Stamp their dark impress of sinister lines.—
 Alas!

ATHELW.

Why sighs my King?

KING EDGAR.

King, king!—again, alas!

ATHELW.

What, kings have griefs too?

'This true then—not philosophy's mere carping?

KING EDGAR.

Oh, for the subject's lot!—I hate mine own.

ATHELW.

Subjects there be not loth for such exchange,
As kings have found ere this to their own cost.

KING EDGAR.

Blind ignorance fathers still ambition's spawn,
And robs of peace to dower with despair.

Oh, little kens the sheltered rush of storms
That rage above and waste the lordly elm!

Place and high rank—alas, what specious bau-
bles!

Kings are but impotent playthings in the hands
Of Fate, and at the best but master-puppets
That dance betimes upon the string of passion,
And other chords that move the simplest swain
To sorry capers, long the jest of sages,
And e'en perhaps less fortunate and weaker,
Plus their peculiar cares. (*abruptly*) Dost know
Elfrida?

ATHELW.

Mine ears her fame but not mine eyes her person.

KING EDGAR.

Is she betrothed that steals the hearts of all?

ATHELW.

To none betrothed, though courted by the realm,
She reigns a fickle queen and fancy-free.

KING EDGAR.

Come hither, then, and softly in thine ear
I'll whisper my confession:—
Edgar will wed her.

ATHELW.

Sire?

KING EDGAR.

Edgar will wed her.

ATHELW.

Oh!—kindly stars did smile upon her birth—
May they still shed blessings on her nuptials!

KING EDGAR (*pacing the room*)

Yes!

Let her be crowned that's hailed the queen of
beauty,

Since I must banish self to banish her:—
E'er in my waking ear her praises ring,
E'er to my sleeping eye her image comes—
At least as fancy fond depicts her—
Radiant and young, and graceful as a sprite.
Alas!—she hath become the soul of me,
Creeping by stealth into the deepest crypts
Of being, where she reigns enshrined in love.
Oh!—at the casual mention of her name
My pulses thrill with rapture, and desire
Most vehement consumes me.*
But Athelwold, before we put the picture
In's golden frame thou shalt inspect it closely,
And with the critic's captious eye pronounce
What charm is overdrawn, what flaw exists:—

*The ardent and inflammable nature of King Edgar is but too well attested by authentic history.

And for this purpose shalt direct repair,
 Attended as is meet, to Olgar's castle;
 Where, if the maid's as fair and good as rumored,
 Thou shalt bespeak her consort to thy King;
 And as a token of authority
 Wear this, my signet.

[*Gives ATHELWOLD his ring.*

ATHELW.

How if I judge amiss, alas, O King?

KING EDGAR.

Thou shalt not suffer for default of judgment,
 But by thy hopes!—by all thou holdest sacred!
 (*solemnly*)

Swear on thy knees not to betray thy King,
 But speak the truth, bating nor jot nor tittle
 Of all thou seest, of all thou hearest.

[*The KING raises his hand.*

ATHELW. (*kneeling*)

Witness, high Heaven! I take the solemn oath.

KING EDGAR.

Then get thee gone,—I'll rail at lagging time,
 And pine till thou returnest. [They embrace.

ATHELW.

Farewell!—thou wilt commend thy favorite's
 zeal. [Going.

KING EDGAR. (*turns in the act of retiring*)

Oh!—bide a moment—stay—a black-browed
 priest,

I do bethink me, waits for thee without,
 And he will travel in thy company.

In sooth, thy mission is supposed to be
 In his behalf—this satellite of Dunstan—

To bring to justice one whom Olgar shields
Who hath done Offa injury.—But dissemble!—
Cloak well the true design with feigned zeal
For Offa, but encompass the main object;
And mark me, for the matter in dispute,
Adjust it not to Olgar's detriment
Be what its merits may, or Dunstan's wishes,
Who will enlarge upon particulars.
Away, and learn the truth!—and may thy lips
Blast not my hopes!

ATHELW.

Forefend it, kindly Heaven!

[*Exeunt severally.*



ACT II.



ACT II.

ACT II, SCENE I.—The forest near ATHELSTAN'S castle.

Enter FOUR OUTLAWS dragging in REDWALD.

FIRST OUT.

Jog, jog!

[Pushing RED.

SEC. OUT. (*sings*)

SONG.

*Robbing the rich that rob the poor
Is Fortune's spite, misfortune's cure;—
And Fortune's still a blind old dame,
Leaving a crutch where none are lame—
E'er, as the poor knock at her door,
Still busy with some rich man's store,
While they that lack may need, I ween,
Till glowing icicles are seen:—*

Thus runs the world awry—

Sing ho! the world's awry.

*The rich man's all, the poor man's nought,—
The world foreclosed, e'en Heaven is bought—
Deny't, fat priest! deny.
You like it not?—Then move a peg—*

Get off the planet!—

Or if y' will not meekly die,

Nor yet trapan it,*

Why, zounds, dog! cringe and beg—

God keep the rich, sing I!

CHORUS.

They shall divide, divide, divide!

*Trapan—to cozen, to take advantage of by trick, snare, or stratagem,—hence to prosper by unfair means at the world's expense.

FIRST OUT.

I claim the cloak he flaunts with pride.

[Tears it off.]

SEC. OUT.

His coat is mine, that fact is plain. [Seizes it.]

THIRD OUT.

And lest in cuerpo he remain*

I'll strip the duke amain, amain:—

[Going about it.]

'Twere ill a lord of his degree

Should lack, sirs, in civility.

FOURTH OUT.

Bravo!—and not to see me out

He'll grant his breeches too, sans doubt.

[To his spoils.]

RED. (*struggling*)

Fiends! Fiends!

FIRST OUT.

To it, Harold! Thou'l taste defeat else. (*sings*)

Where twain do strive

Not twain may thrive.

SEC. OUT.

Ho, ho, ho! He has his hands full. (*sings*)

His shirt, his breeches and his shoes—

Quoth he—I've still some skin to lose.

THIRD OUT.

Bully boy! Bully boy! I could split my sides laughing.

**In cuerpo*—"without the formalities of full dress; without cloak or upper garment, the shape of the body being exposed"—*en deshabille*.

Scene I.

THE FAITHLESS FAVORITE.

SEC. OUT.

La, they'll stick, they'll stick! Two pence he
don't shell him.

FIRST OUT.

I'll take ye.

FOURTH OUT. (*panting*)

Pest on't! I'll straighten thee. [Draws a dagger.

CHORUS.

Hold! Hold!

Enter HAKO.

HAKO.

How now!—what do ye? Stay thy murthering
hand!

[Knocks the OUTLAW'S dagger from his grasp.

FOURTH OUT.

Faith, Captain! not so fast:—we have e'en limed
a bird of gay plumage. Oh! you will struggle,
will you? [To RED.

FIRST OUT.

And let none hold back from the plucking, say I.

SEC. OUT.

And I.

THIRD OUT.

And I.

HAKO.

Nay, as to that, let custom prevail. But alack,
Sir Melancholy!—thou wast like to have been
somewhat misused. (to RED.) Ha, ha, ha!

FIRST OUT.

Warily, warily.

FOURTH OUT.

Fear not me.

[*Secures RED.*

HAKO.

What, not one word?—How took ye him, galliards?

FIRST OUT.

Under an old oak muttering paternosters.

SEC. OUT.

As he doth now, belike—he screws his face so.

THIRD OUT.

On his knees, yes;—as to praying—well!

FOURTH OUT.

Rather searching for something.

THIRD OUT.

More likely.

FIRST OUT.

Ods-bodikins! What if this be the apparition?

HAKO.

Apparition, quotha?

FIRST OUT.

By the mass, Captain!—it hath haunted the woods
the past sennight, as many a stout forester can
tell thee.

HAKO.

Peace, fool!

SEC. OUT. (*feeling RED.*)

Here's common dross!—This is mere concupiscential flesh and blood.

THIRD OUT.

Marry, doubt it not!—the ghost's genuine.

FIRST OUT.

Oh!—to be sure, he lacks the wraith's stature.

SEC. OUT.

And its manly breadth of shoulder.

THIRD OUT.

Its long arms, swinging like flails.

FOURTH OUT.

And its beard.

FIRST OUT.

Its flowing hair.

SEC. OUT.

And its hollow groans:—by'r Lady!—it fetched a
most dismal sound.

HAKO.

Amazement! Ye all saw it then?

FIRST OUT.

Saw it?—Saw the ghost?—hear him! Mass, no!
—not I, thank you.

SEC. OUT.

Nor I.

THIRD OUT.

Nor I.

FOURTH OUT.

Nor I.

HAKO.

Excellent!—here's human nature. (*laughs aloud*)

Here's the metaphysics of mystery!—Thus miracles have many witnesses:—give superstition rein and infected fancy will blithely describe things supernatural, which human eye hath ne'er seen, with as much precision as a lawyer's

clerk draws an inventory. (*to the OUTLAWS*)
On what grounds, then, are ye so circumstantial?
[Confused silence.]

FIRST OUT. (*presently nudging SEC.*)

Answer! Answer!

SEC. OUT. (*nudging THIRD*)

Answer!

THIRD OUT. (*to FOURTH*)

Now, by Saint Denis!—was't not you told it me?

FOURTH OUT. (*cornered*)

Who, I?—well!—I—(*defiantly*) I had Tom Thimblewit's word for it.

HAKO.

He is not here—ay, thus it goes.

FIRST OUT.

A true ghost-seer, Tom! [More confidently.]

FOURTH OUT.

Seven-seventh son—born with a caul on Sunday.
What, doubt Tom?

FIRST OUT.

He smelt horribly of brimstone that night—his
doxy swears it.—All know Tom!

SEC. OUT.

Oh!—there can be no mistake about it.

[With conviction.]

THIRD OUT.

To be sure not! [Very positively.]

FOURTH OUT.

Not a doubt! [As dogmatically.]

HAKO.

Redoubtable authority!—Bulwarks of credibility!

Scene I.

THE FAITHLESS FAVORITE.

FOURTH OUT. (*angrily*)

Zounds!—as to that twenty others—

FIRST OUT.

Ay, FORTY!—

HAKO.

Of unimpeachable veracity—

So ye would vouch—all more or less remote,
I dare be sworn. But let it pass—content ye.

(*to RED.*)

Earl, duke, or prince, who art thou?—speak!

[RED. is silent.]

FIRST OUT.

He scorns to answer.

SEC. OUT.

His gaze is lost in wild vacuity.

THIRD OUT. (*shaking RED.*)

Hill—hill—hilla-ho! The wight is scarce awake.

FOURTH OUT. (*brandishing*)

Shall I knock in his sinciput with my partisan?

HAKO.

Not so, Harold Hawk!

'Tis a lone springald worth a goodly ransom,—
More little recks, save what and whence he is,
Which time will featly tell.

Attend him hence well guarded to the cave,
Clad in his proper raiment, and, though captive,
Accord him gentle usage in detention.

Despatch!

[The OUTLAWS restore REDWALD'S garments.]

FIRST OUT. (*sings*)

*Oh!—he was a knight for a lady pert—
Ten stone or moe of humanized dirt,
With a trusty sword to trim his nails,
And a squire to catch him toads and snails:—
For the knight he loved a foreign stew,
And found his fate in a ragout—
And that is the end of this legend true.*

CHORUS.

And that, etc. [Exeunt the FOUR with RED.

HAKO (*flinging himself under a tree*)

Let the fool laugh!—wise men lament enow.
Tut!—its afflictions keep the world in humor;—
Our worst misfortunes tune some fellow's mirth,
Who in his turn shall weep while others laugh.
Sarcastic flings create infectious laughter,
But purged of malice men were grave as owls:—
There lies wit's recompense and vindication.

(pulls a ring out of his pocket)

Hah, thou jewel,
Thou be'st a goodly stone right boldly won—
Ho, ho, ho!
The festive lords would not say nay to that,
Thou trophy of a Dane's audacity. (puts it on)
What was thy source, imperial substance pure?
Belike thou shin'st a crystallized ray
Of the first sun that warmed Creation's dawn,
And still undimmed, thou mock'st humanity—
Unstable matter cast in tenuous mould!—
With its mere frail and passing nothingness.

(takes it off)

Ah!—a motto. (*he reads*)

"Losel, losel,"—I hear the woods groan—*

Pish!—here be characters I can't decipher,
Though the last line is plain and legible:—

(*repeats*)

"Losel, losel,"—I hear the woods groan—

.....

.....

Who wears the ring will claim his own.

Humph, humph!

Quaint words save thought and cheer the fool's
conceit.

Enter an OUTLAW, running.

OUT.

Fly, Captain, fly!—the soldiers are upon us.

[*Exit.*]

HAKO.

Athelstan's archers, by Christ's holy rood,
And, ten to one, in odds but ill withstood.

[*Exit.*]

ACT II, SCENE II.—The same.

*Enter ATHELSTAN and SOLDIERS with an
OUTLAW, captive.*

ATH.

After them, after them! What ho!—the scent's
but a hot chase to the keen hound, though the
hare to a dull one. [*Exeunt several SOLDIERS.*

**Losel*—Careless, wasteful, slothful;—used here indefinitely, as all talismanic inscriptions acquire power from obscurity. The rest has reference to Athelwold (or *wald*), noble wood, and Redwald, red wood.

FIRST SOLD.

What's to be done with this acorn, my lord?

ATH.

Hang him high on his native oak, and that presently.

FIRST SOLD.

Festinately, your worship. [Produces a rope.]

SEC. SOLD.

May we thus, too, serve the leader that so audaciously entered your lordship's castle!

ATH.

Yea, truly!—one great thief hung keeps many little rogues out of gaol. [Exit.]

THIRD SOLD.

Comrade, wilt pledge me a cup of mead ere thou goest?

FIRST SOLD.

Nay, let him keep his thirst awhile:—he'll drink the devil's health the better presently.

SEC. SOLD.

Thou'l sup on hot dishes to-night, Ned, in lieu of venison.

OUT. (*with supreme sang froid*)

All's one for that!—

The world's a sorry tavern at the best,
And he's the wise knave that's not o'er finical;—
Take what's put in the dish, sirrah!

Where all's rank a nice nose starveth a man.

Wouldst more o' the homily, fellow?

Discharge just reckonings, go about thy business,
And when night falls fear not the bugabo,

But civilly take thy leave, not grudging those
 Privileged to sit up later,—for thyself,
 Content to sleep when the day's done, not pul-
 ing:—

All must soon follow to the narrow room.
 The way thou well canst find without a candle
 Bought off some clamorous rogue with half thy
 goods—

Oh!—'tis the damned candle merchants
 Whose tricks have vested death with all its hor-
 rors,
 And darker the night the higher priced their
 wares.

Peste!—will ye finish?

[*He whistles.*

FIRST SOLD.

Eftsoons, thou merry knave!

[*Flings the rope round the OUTLAW'S neck.*

SEC. SOLD.

Ha, ha, ha!—He is in haste to be gone.

THIRD SOLD.

But some pyramids will crumble before he re-
 turns.

FIRST SOLD.

Heave ho!

[*Scene closes,*

ACT II, SCENE III.—A village in DEVONSHIRE.

Enter two UNDER-OFFICERS of a court.

THE LONG ONE.

Has the case of Osburga come to trial yet?

THE SHORT ONE.

She indicted as a witch with her daughter?

T. L. O.

The same.

T. S. O.

Yes, sooth;—this morn, and both acquitted.

T. L. O.

Acquitted!—and after the hot water ordeal,* too?

T. S. O.

Pooh, verdancy!—name me not ordeals:—are there not powders that steam up in cold water to deceive on-lookers? And are not judges vendible?

T. L. O.

Are eggs?—Well!—as to that girl, I regret not her coming off, seeing that she is the less censurable under her bringing-up.

T. S. O.

O'er-young, too, methinks:—beat thine ass too much when his hide is tender and thou canst throw the scourge away anon, and find Goliath's staff a vain prod.

T. L. O.

Who can censure her?—Where the channel winds the stream turns: as bred so sped.

T. S. O.

Meaning that, as a winding channel makes a crooked stream, so evil habits learned in youth lead betimes to shame and ruth. Early misdirection indeed leads apace to bootless repentance.*[Very oracularly like the rest of this talk.]*

**Ordeals*—It is probably unnecessary to remind the reader that the ordeal of red-hot iron was reserved for the aristocracy, that of hot water allotted to the common people.

T. L. O.

Yes, faith, thou commentary!—And conversely,
whoso lieth among flowers carrieth with him
betimes the fragrance thereof:—so good breed-
ing long defies bad living.

T. S. O.

By the beards of thy apothegms!—I am aweary.
What say'st—shall we not take yon by-path
(*pointing*) and save time?

T. L. O.

To save time?—Ha, ha, ha!

T. S. O.

Why laugh'st?

T. L. O.

Ha, ha, ha!—There's something beyond the hedge
—that's thy concern (*sings*)

He sleeps sound who never winks,
But sure he's dead who never drinks.

T. S. O.

Thou long-winded attenuation!—Why dost eat,
hah? Tell me that.

T. L. O.

Go to;—short words take long paces.

T. S. O.

I scorn thee and thy insinuations. What, sir!—I
deny not a seemly official portliness, (*padding*
it) or the infirmity of short legs, but defy
rank comparisons. As to agility—

T. L. O.

Short legs?—Ah!—that reminds me—I'll mollify
thee with a story. A FAT WIDOW BATHING—

[*Exeunt.*]

FROM BEHIND THE SCENES.

Ha, ha, ha!

ACT II, SCENE IV.—The same.—A lane with a hut in the background.

Enter ROWENA and an OLD SAXON.

ROW.

Like dew upon the shriveled leaf and sere,
Mocking the death within, upon my heart
Distill* thy words of comfort all untimely.
Alas, my youth!—Oh, guileless innocence!—
Why was I born?—unskilled in human wiles!—
An orphan, too!—but doubly now deserted.

“He will return!”—thus evermore anon
Hope buoys the sinking heart—
“He will return”—but vain the straining eye
Seeks the familiar features in each throng;—
Vain the ear hearkeneth at the midnight hour—
Startled to watchfulness when dead leaves fall,
When all may sleep
Save frenzy, guilt and love,
By cozening hopes still roused to bootless vigil,
Till the sick soul find surcease in the grave.

O Death! Thou hast been ruthless called,
But art less cruel than man,
For thou, Necessity Inevitable!
Oft heal'st deep wounds no other cure retrieves,
Which man inflicts on man in wantonness;
And thou, the great recourse,

*Distill—*dis* and *stillo*—to drop down,—here used etymologically.

Fail'st neither time, nor place, nor age, nor sex!
 But ever, like an indulgent mother, coming—
 An all-just power—giv'st long respite to pain.

(she kneels)

Lord!—in supreme compassion

Uproot the broken reed—

Woe, woe is me!—but not alone destroy,
 Not on one only pour thy vials of wrath,
 But on him also—O perfidious wretch!—
 The perjured father of the babe unborn.

[She weeps—he waits for the storm to subside.]

OLD SAX. (at length)

Dost sigh for death?

ROW.

Ay me, unhappy!—Do I sigh for death?

That boon—

OLD SAX.

Peace!—here's that shall serve thee. (*produces a vial*)

Draw but the stopper and inhale two breaths,
 And thou wilt sink in deadly torpor down,—
 Oblivious clay ere thought can frighten faith.

Nay!—shrink not back,—why dost thou hesitate?
 Dastards lament the fate they durst not mend.
 Or wouldst thou rather plunge into thy bosom—
 Like a true Norseman's daughter—trenchant
 steel?

Take then this instrument. [Offers a dagger.]

ROW. (*recoiling*)

Away!

Thou mock'st me, knowing well I durst not do it:
 Frail woman's desperate resolutions ever

Fall short the deed, put suddenly to the touch—
 What!—two at one fell stroke?—no, no!
 Besides—who knows?—he yet may learn contri-
 tion.

OLD SAX.

Oh, notable juggling!—Sweet consistency!
 Here's the very cozenage thou complain'dst of.

ROW.

Oh, tax me not with that!—what hath consistency
 To do with woman?—Whiles the winds blow
 Where the winds list, her moods will veer and
 vary.

But, hoary mentor, I perceive thy drift:—
 Unruly minds are curbed by harsh reproof,
 When mild remonstrance fails—I humbly thank
 thee.

Thy lesson proves these lips belie my heart,
 Which clings to life, c'er-burdened though it be;—
 And still I love.—Ah, cruel Thelwy! [*She weeps.*]

OLD SAX. (*leaning on his staff*)

Girl, this is better;—I commend thee for it.
 Passion affects a tragic insincerity,
 But they are not deceived who read humanity.
 Live on!—Hope ever!—nay, why shouldst thou
 not—

Since, to assuage the pangs
 Of that small, festering sore i' the loins of Time-
 Man!—

No healing balm exists save this same hopefulness?
 But look you, sundry faculties,

Powers or attributes, call them what you please—

Prudence and fortitude, hope, faith and judgement,
With instincts keen, beneficent and true—
Obedient all to wise-directing Reason,
Have been implanted in the human soul,
And, rightly exercised, are fully equal
To all our petty, mundane exigencies.
But mortals, ignorant, rash or little versed
In their own strength, contemning innate powers,
Bewail—lugubrious—ills of folly born;—
And sunk supine, in prayer—
Though 'gainst adversities full-panoplied, fore-
provided—
Assail high Heaven with cries unwearied,
Thinking to move Omnipotence—
Vertiginous weaklings, thought-incompetent!—
To unseemly supererogation:—
Like bold petitioners pressing to the King,
When at the foreign capital installed
Dwell his ambassadors with plenary power.
For such I deem our faculties divine—
God's effluence direct and representative,—
If Godhead be,—
And all-sufficient boot for mortal ills,
Potent alike to obviate and annul.

ROW.

Too deep for me thy thoughts, but this I know:
Who wins the puissant ear best pleads his suit,
As fountains gush when niggard rills do fail.
O good King Edgar!—would he heard my plaint—
But soon he shall.

OLD SAX.

What!

Bend'st thou thy cumbered footsteps towards the court?

ROW.

Yea.

OLD SAX.

Wherefore?

ROW.

To seek *him* out,—my wedded lord, Earl Thelwy—
Of the King's thanes the noblest and most
comely.

'Twas the King's mandate tore him from these
arms,

And meet it is the monarch make amends.

OLD SAX.

Where lies his castle, say, and broad demesne?—

What is his lineage—what his father's name?

ROW.

Why,—I—I know not that. [Embarrassed.]

OLD SAX.

Nay, if thou wilt not thou need'st not divulge
it,—

Though too secretive pride oft loses friends.

ROW.

Be not thus wroth, O thou that shelterest me!
I speak the truth.

OLD SAX.

Then truth's once more incredible.—A wife,
And not know that? — How many eyes hast
thou?—

Or ears, or hands, or feet?—Know'st aught of
this?—

Wives know as well the other.

ROW.

Alas, alas!

Distrusting naught implicit love dies mute:—
He told me never more—nor durst I question—
Than this—his name was Thelwy, born an earl.

OLD SAX. (*striking his staff on the ground*)

O simple, child-like, fond credulity!

Why dwell'st in woman's shape?—

Thou speed'st Hell's arch-devices. (*a pause*)

Go!—ask the world how many maids purblind,
Daily betrayed, trust all to lover's vows—
Ten thousand will reply;—ten thousand thous-
and—

Or let me rather say a countless host—

Suborned by death lie speechless:—

Ay! rot self-slaughtered in accusing graves—

If happily the outcast's bones find burial—

In weed-grown trench unmarked cast by rude
hands—

Rocked to oblivion 'neath the whelming wave,
Or by absolving potion, cord or dagger

Rash hurried hence, impotent to despair.

Nor be forgot the cities' cancerous scum,

That by disease slow-eaten loathsome live,

A ruinous scourge wide spreading,—and the
monument

Unto his daily vice,

And oldest crime—man's perfidy to woman.

ROW. (*shrieks*)

Alas, alas!—I shudder at thy words.

Am I then lost, O God?—Give me thy poniard—

Nay, I'll despatch myself—Oh, give it, give it!

Thou point'dst the way, old man!—'twas thine
 own counsel— (*struggling*)
 Naught dread I now—why should I?—Hope is
 life,
 And that spells Thelwy.

OLD SAX. (*restraining her*)

Thou ravest distracted—fy upon this tongue!—
 Come, come!—ply patience—is this the lesson?
 I know not aught concerns the noble Thelwy,
 But spake on mere surmise and indignation.
 Thou shalt not die!—beyond grief's narrow hor-
 izon
 Lies good grief dreams not of.

ROW. (*subsiding*)

Methought thine ominous words had direst im-
 port:—
 His death, belike, or—Holy Mother-Virgin!
 Black apprehensions stun me.
 Souls in despair have perished through one word
 Falling from thoughtless lips,
 When speech more kind had saved all.
 But I'll be patient;—yes! I'll quell these tumults.
 [Sighs.]

OLD SAX.

I prithee, broach anew thy earlier griefs:—
 Thy parents both are gone and kindred near?

ROW. (*plaintively*)

Dead, dead!
 All perished in a massacre of Danes,
 Slain in the solemn watches of the night,—
 Unshrive their souls, unsepultured their bones.
 O my dilating eye!—(*rising*) It sees them yet—

Scene IV.

THE FAITHLESS FAVORITE.

The mother clasps in vain her bleating babes,—
Torn from her gory breast, she shrieks and dies!
The father, mindful of his youthful fame—
A rover once, he scourged the northern main—
Stands i' the breach,
Shouts his wild cry and dreadful wields his
brand!—
But, all unequal, soon the conflict ends:—(*sinks
down*)
Two orphans only live of tender years.

OLD SAX.

Misjudging Death!—why didst thou spare those
twain?

ROW.

Did I say twain?—Alack, for thoughtless lips!—
Ere long my peevish brother disappeared,
Kidnapped or kept perdue by prudent friends,
Or slain—I know not which nor e'er shall know—
Whilst to a distant convent's shelt'ring walls
I was conveyed—there nurtured many years—
O placid years!—How could I bless those walls
Still in my prayers, but that 'twas there I met
him!—

By stress of weather blown to wreck my peace,—
But hush, rude lips!—'tis treason to upbraid.

OLD SAX.

Oh, fatal accident of a tempest's fury!

What follows?

ROW.

What boots particulars?—suffice, we met:—
And when occasion offered to an hamlet—
An obscure hamlet—fled, and there were wed-
ded—

At least one clad in cassock read the forms.
 Three blissful months then sped—O brief, brief
 months!—

When Thelwy met a courier of the King,
 Armed with a royal message and command—
 So he alleged—which summoned him to court;—
 I saw him nevermore. (*she springs up*) Hark,
 hark!

What wild uproar!—alack, it comes this way!

OLD SAX.

A hubbub of voices, like a hue and cry,
 Hoarser and nearer—lo, lo!

Enter OSBURGA pursued by VILLAGERS.

FIRST VILL.

Burn her—burn, burn, burn!

SEC. VILL.

Down with her, Lucifer's hell-kite!

THIRD VILL.

Head her off there!—hah—I have thee, witch!

(*howls*)

'Ow, 'ow, 'ow!—she's scratched my eyes out.

[*He grabbing OSBURGA, she attacks him with her nails and escapes.*

ROW.

What hath the beldam done?—

Oh, for ten minutes' manhood!—Thy weapons.

(*seizes the OLD SAXON'S staff and dagger and confronts the mob—all pause dumfounded. The OLD SAXON comes to ROWENA'S side, while OSBURGA enters the hut*)

Goodman bell-wether! (*menacing the leader*)

And you, and you, and you! (*menacing others*)
 I'd have ye hold!—kind masters, be persuaded—
 Fall back!

Ye number half a score, but look ye, one
 Spits on this dagger move the van an inch. (*they fall back—ROWENA mocks them*)

What, brave hearts!—diffident? (*the mob increases*)

Come, come!—who's bold?—Elect the sacrifice,
 And then cry havoc, charging o'er this body
 To vent on one more frail your puissant wrath—
 Old like your mothers, woman like your wives—
 But that's all mal-apropos! (*the mob still increasing*)

The burden's still, if ye must have your quarry
 You're very welcome;—but in time remember
 ONE of ye perishes!

Dies like a dog, my masters!—
 Scratched by the Viking's daughter.

[*The form of ROWENA swells and towers with heroic emotion,—the mob still increases but does nothing.*

FIRST VILL. (*aside*)

That ONE might be ME—who knows?

SEC. VILL. (*aside*)

Humph!—suppose that's ME.

THIRD VILL. (*aside*)

I'm unlucky—that won't be ME!

FOURTH VILL.

I trow she means it—softly there!—push another.

FIFTH VILL.

She's a Dane's wolf-cub—didst hear?—How her eyes flash!

THIRD VILL. (*ashamed and trying to make a jest of it*)

By Saint Paul's marrow-bones!—if there's to be more scratching in this business I wash my hands on't.

[*Some laugh, others murmur.—They seem on the point of dispersing.*

A WOMAN.

At the fell witch!—Down with her sorceries!—
Lest old wives break their jests upon your shins.
Slay—slay—slay! — Death mends what judges
mar. (*no response*)

No?—Mute and motionless?—Alas, my babes!
What will protect ye from the witch's spells?
Vile coward scum—oh, see them! — fear-trans-fixed
O'er a girl's skewer and a gaffer's staff!—
There's for that strumpet!

[*Hurls a stone—the mob sways and seems on the point of charging, when a horn is heard—an instant later the following, mounted, dash upon the scene:—Enter ATHELWOLD, ALFRED, OFFA and retinue.*

ATHELW.

Ha!—A tumultuous rabble!—ride them down,
gentles!

Baiting a woman, too!—Up Rossignol—
Bravely, bravely!

[*He reins his horse and with his retinue charges the VILLAGERS, who scatter in all directions,—the nobles jeering and hooting.*

ALFRED (*as they are about to spur off*)

Hold, Athelwold!

Shall we not pause and inquire into this?

ATHELW.

No, no!—press on. Zounds!—they are dispersed—

Enough! We have not time to lose.

[*Exeunt*—ATHELW. turning in his saddle and regarding ROWENA curiously, but only for a moment. OSBURGA comes out of the hut.

ROW.

'Tis he!

[*Faints*.

OLD SAX.

Who, where, which one?—Ho, horsemen, ho!
 'Tis vain to shout—they're gone.—She swoons—
 Oh, that eternal contradiction—woman!

OSB.

Stand back!—this is a woman's office.

OLD SAX.

She wakes.

ROW.

O God! [Works convulsively.

OLD SAX.

Speak!—What ails thee wretched?

OSB.

She writhes like one in agony,
 Rolling and tumbling—stretching helpless hands
 To us, more feckless.—Why, indeed—umph!—

OLD SAX.

See how she rolls those eyes and draws short
 gasps,

Like one sore spent!—Ah!—now she resteth.

OSB.

How is it with thee? (*to ROW.*) Raise her head
 gently.

ROW.

Dying!—Dying!—Convulsive pangs
 Seize on my entrails. Merciful Father!
 Thus—to thus—now—now!— [Swoons again.]

OSB.

Oh!—bear her lightly to yon shelt'ring roof,
 And when 'tis dusk away to mine own cave,
 Where I will nurse her back to perfect health—
 Be what her illness may.

[Exeunt bearing ROWENA into the hut.]

ACT II, SCENE V.—The same.

Enter the TWO OFFICERS very leisurely.

THE LONG ONE. (*wiping his lips*)

TOUCHING THE MOLE—

THE SHORT ONE. (*ditto*)

Where was the mole?

THE LONG ONE.

Where was it?—Oh, rare!—

[Whispers—exeunt the two convulsed.]

ACT II, SCENE VI.—Before OSBURGA'S cave—a wild place, with the sound of a torrent filling the solitude.—Night.

Enter HAKO and RODA meeting.

RODA.

What's there?—Who art thou? [Recoiling.]

HAKO.

The stranger's challenge!—Thou art frightened?

RODA (*not too cordially*)

Hako!

HAKO.

Thy Hako. (*embraces her*)

Why dost thou greet me thus?—Sped twenty years,

I'd know the very parings of thy nails,

And every single eyelash from another's—

By the dim flicker of a half-snuffed rush.

Yes!—rased and lost to time,

In the thronged avenues of Hell thy shade

Should not out-post remembrance:—

But Roda—poor, forgetful maid!—must ask
“Who art thou” of her lover.

RODA (*coldly*)

Thou art more strenuous than poetical.

Whence comest thou, lost sheep?—Thou are proscribed

For old tricks, mind,—why then in Devonshire?

[*They sit.*

HAKO. (*gayly*)

Why, an ill wind blew me hither. (*sings*)

A chilling blast that in the east

Blew from a castle high,

And wrapped in winding-sheets at least

Full twenty rogues, perdy.

They've since learnt to sleep out nights, faith!

As I may here in Devonshire.—Wouldst know more?—

The roving bird still wings where summer breathes:—

Thou art my summer, therefore am I here.

There's jewels to match thine eyes.

[*Throws presents in RODA'S lap.*

RODA (*beginning to smile*)

Ah, truant, truant!—how canst tell they're
bright yet?

The spiteful moon sinks in the gulf of night,
And through the murky pall what eye can
pierce?

HAKO (*playfully*)

Roda begs compliments like an am'rous quean,—
Inviting me to swear the moon's eclipsed,
That Roda's charms illume the thickest night,
Or some such fustian, ancient gallantry—
But I'll not flatter save by light o' moon.—
See!—she breaks forth (*rising*)
From the wide ocean of blackness all around her,
Full-orbed and glorious!—So the hope we cling
to
Beams beauteous when the whole world fails or
damns us.—

Ah, Christ!

[*Beating his breast.*

RODA.

What's that gleams on thy finger?

HAKO.

Sweet, a ring.

RODA (*examining it*)

Oh, magnificent!—Come, give it me. [*Kisses him.*

HAKO.

No, I'll keep the trinket—

Hast not enough, insatiate?

RODA.

Ask'st that of woman, simpleton?—Enough!—

Scene VI.

THE FAITHLESS FAVORITE.

She recks all naught that's balked in one desire,
Though an adoring world kneel at her feet:—
Dame Eve, thou know'st, gave Paradise for an
apple

Her heart was set on.—*I'll have the ring.*

HAKO.

There's a dying man's curse on it.

RODA.

'Twill hold a few centuries:—
Hell's paltry millions all are fore-engaged
To other curses;—ne'er a devil's at leisure
To carry this out.*

HAKO.

Girl, that's true enough!—
Were man's fell wishes visited on his kind
The air were full of devils:—plagues and famine,
Engulfing earthquakes, volcans, crashing worlds
Are bagatelles to his malevolence.

RODA.

What art thou prating?—
Teaze me no longer.—Stand ho!—deliver—
I'll seize the thing I covet. [Attempting it.]

HAKO.

Now by thy black brows!—thou shalt not.

RODA.

Now by thy red beard!—I shall.

*It is, perhaps, not too extravagant to make Roda speak as if she regarded devils as the efficient agents of a curse's maleficence. When a drama is cast in a rude age we must, if possible, become temporarily primitive in order to properly understand it. *Put thyself in his place*,—the law of laws in life,—is also the best rule in drama, either as respects the writing thereof or the reading.

HAKO.

Forbear—by Heaven!—thou shalt not.

RODA.

Oh, that's another pitch!—thou'rt in earnest.

(desists)

Fie on thee, stingy!—now I see thy baseness:—
Unasked thou lavishest gaws of little worth,
But wisely keep'st what's precious.—Take all thy
dross!

[She throws the jewels on the ground and pouts.—Hake regards her half amused, half angry.—A nightingale sings.

HAKO.

Sweet interloper!—Oh, ungracious maid,
List to its plaintive note!—My bosom swells
Responsive to its throbbing ecstasy.

RODA.

'Tis silent.

HAKO.

Oh!—what checks thee, bird?—Sing blithely,
Unless thy love be rude as mine's unkind—
Turning away or casting looks askance. (*the bird
sings*)

Hark!—again.

O soulless!—like a stone inert and cold
Thou sitt'st unmelting,—
Though oft I've heard when Philomela sings
Estranged lovers straight are reconciled,
Or else they love not true.

RODA (*aside*)

This is e'en the boarding stage—now bravely!—
The tear prevails where love's cajoleries fail.

(aloud)

But Hako loves me not!

[Weeps.]

HAKO (*with deep feeling*)

I love thee not?—Now, by God's eyes!—

Which are yon stars—but no!—I'll swear no oaths:—

Compulsion of assent is not belief,
And words are arrant traitors to deep thoughts,—
The noblest when expressed seem wan and sickly.
Oh! I could pour out my soul in burning vows,
But thou wouldest not grow fond.

RODA (*archly*)

Gramercy, Hako!

The spirit of true love breathes in little acts
Of sweet complaisance, not in mock heroics,
Nor fulsome vows, persuasive oft to ruin.

HAKO.

Still on that scent?—Selah.—Man made the world

To cast in woman's lap,—kings leave it
To loll there:—then take thou the ring (*giving it*).

'Twas not I grudged thee such a simple gift
That I denied thy wish, but my misgivings:—
Some dark presentiment fills my soul with awe
Whene'er I gaze upon this jeweled band;—
And I would die condemned to triple torment—
Plunge headlong in a pit of hissing adders—*
Ere thou shouldst come to grief through Hako's act,
Or draw upon thee his disastrous fate.—
Yet have thy will.

*The fate of King Lodbrog.

[*Here love's amenities.—RODA gathers up her jewels.—Suddenly she screams and points in terror—REDWALD appears, walking about in the moonlight at a little distance. At the sound of RODA'S voice he disappears.*

HAKO (*to his feet*)

What mad fright is this?—Thou tremblest.

RODA.

Oh!—didst not see it?

HAKO.

See it?—See what? (*aside*) Hath she caught my rogues' superstition through contagion o' these clothes? (*aloud angrily*) Ha!—trifle not with me, jade!—'Tis some lover of thine come untimely upon the scene—thou tremblest for his safety.

RODA.

There, there! [*REDWALD re-appears.*

HAKO (*subdued*)

Now truly I see it—man or specter, it walks visibly before these eyes. Hist!—be silent:—this shall arbitrate 'twixt spirit and matter.

[*Unslings his bow.*

RODA.

See, see! He throws up his hands beseechingly, and now drops on his knees, groveling in the turf. Hold, hold!

HAKO.

He turns his face hitherward (*drops his bow in astonishment*).

Now, by thy disordered wits!—what brings thee to this spot?—'Tis the mad youth that escaped us.

[*Exit RED.*

RODA.

He's gone!

HAKO.

He'll run faster then.

[Exit. Manet RODA.]

ACT II, SCENE VII.—The same.

Enter OSBURGA and the OLD SAXON by another way, bearing in ROWENA.

OSBURGA.

Our weary journey finds its welcome end.

Heigh-ho, heigh-ho!—

How many troubles one day may bring forth!

Old man, thou shalt not leave us,—be persuaded:

Recruited the rabble will return,

And tumble down thy hut about thy ears;—

'Tis no safe lodge.—Hah,—what stands yonder?

Thou, Roda?—Oh!—get thee in, my child,

And swiftly spread, with careful hands, a couch

Of softest down where no rude breath may blow

In wanton play upon these ivory temples—

Building a fire fed with odorous woods,

That she may wake i' the glow and cheerful
light:—

Poor girl, she's chill and numb with the night air.

Nay, dost thou hear?—no words,—obey, obey!

[Exit RODA.]

OLD SAX.

Thank God, she's past her sufferings!

But she keeps strangely silent.

[Bending over ROWENA, she groans.]

OSB.

Her groans do mock thy words.—In, in!

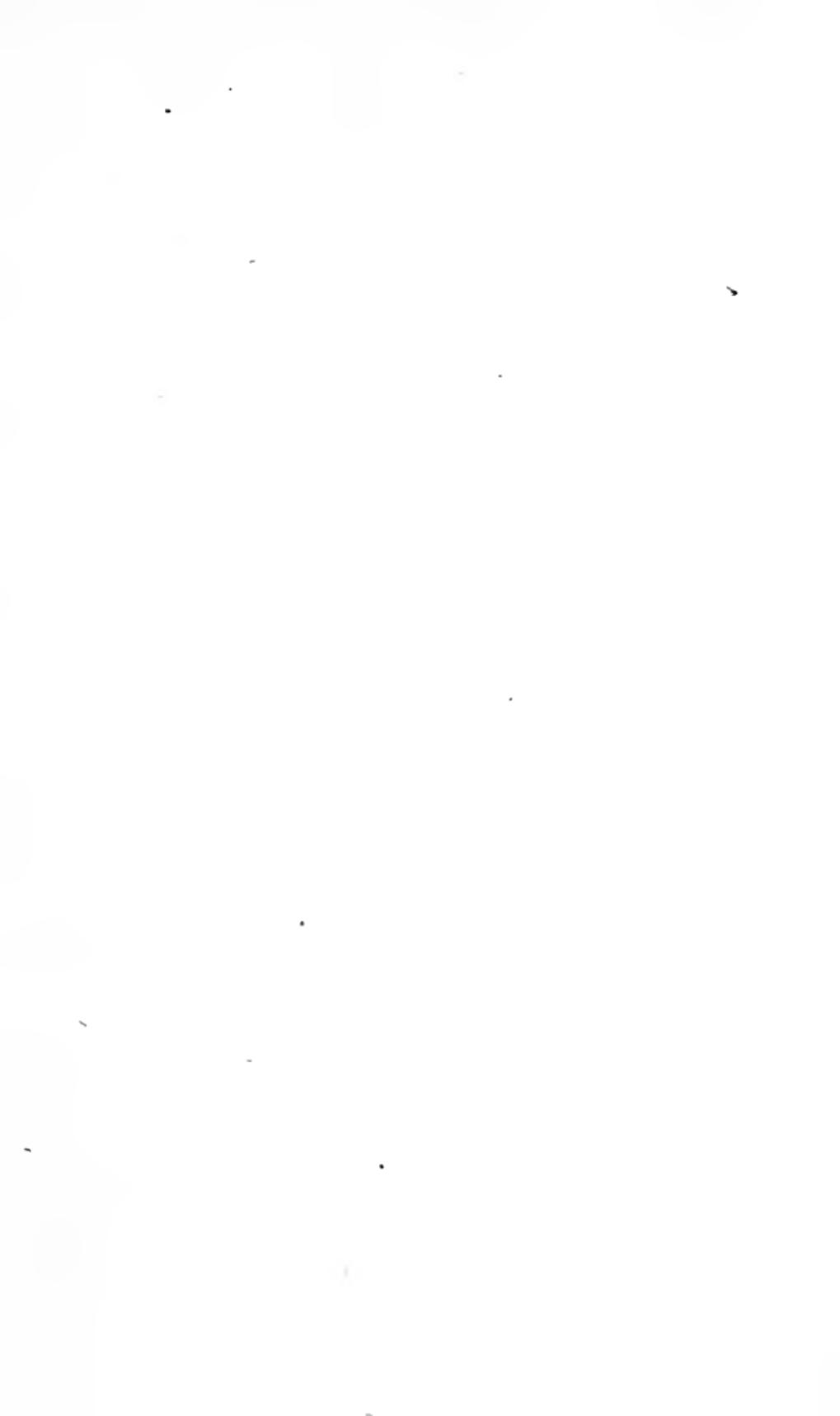
Oh!—what can men know of a woman's sufferings? [Exeunt with ROWENA into the cave.
Enter HAKO.

HAKO.

Gout seize his toes!—He hath evaded me, but no matter!—a score of bold lads escaped with me from Athelstan's vengeance shall look for him.—What, Roda, Roda! (*calling*) Why dost not answer? (*calls again*) Pooh!—she's in the cave.—To hide from a young man—what a strange thing in a modern maid!

[He enters the cave.—Act and scene end.

ACT III.



ACT III.

ACT III, SCENE I.—A highway leading to OL-GAR'S castle.—Twilight.

Enter TWO PEASANTS with shovels.

FIRST PEAS.

Slack bridle, stray colt.—Good master Ina's son, that is set over the serfs, shows not his wonted diligence since the steward went hence with his lordship to tour the estates. But they return to-day.

SEC. PEAS. (*fanning himself*)

The worse for us!—Went the Lady Elfrida with them, lug?

FIRST PEAS.

That did she:—she makes holiday o' these excursions. Oh!—for a pint—

Enter HAKO and OUTLAWS armed.

SEC. PEAS.

Mercy, mercy!—Kind masters, what would ye?

[*Falls on his knees.*

FIRST PEAS. (*ditto*)

O Lord!—These be masterless men—take my penny and welcome—(*fumbling*) here 'tis.

SEC. PEAS.

My wages, too. (*offering it*) My poor children!

[*Bawls.*

HAKO.

Stalwart dog that cowerest in terror, answer me!—Passed a cavalcade of nobles o'er this road on the way to Olgar's castle?

SEC. PEAS.

No, please your worship!—Not since sunrise, I'll

warrant your worship!—We have e'en ploughed
in yon field since the first peep, may't like you.

FIRST PEAS.

Ere Job's coffin was set, great sir, truly.

HAKO.

Providentially they loiter,—if these lie not we
are in time. (*truculently*) Oh!—that the mere
ripping open of their hearts enabled me to
tell't,—how gladly would I do it!

AN OUTLAW.

Hark! *[A trumpet faintly heard.]*

HAKO.

They come, vengeance,—they come!—Ha—these
—what shall be done with them?—but let our
bettors butcher swine—Leof, Rollo, Harold!—
hither. Gag and bind the hinds with stout
withes to some tree. Swiftly on your lives!
(*the PEAS. are bound*) Now to the ambuscade:
—and mark ye all!—every man pick his target
and shoot straight. (*aside*) This shall find him
—all shall perish lest HE escape. (*aloud*)
Lads!—if the owl hoot then only stay your
hands;—if thrice, sling bow, draw blade, up
and at them.

[*The OUTLAWS conceal themselves.—A horn
heard all this time at intervals, approach-
ing,—several now blow in unison.—Then en-
ter OLGAR, INA, ELFRIDA, ELFVIN, and
a small retinue, to the sound of horns, laugh-
ter and singing. The owl hoots as they ap-
pear,—then again, thrice in succession:—at
the signal the OUTLAWS rush forth and sur-*

round OLGAR'S party.—The women shriek, and some of the train attempt resistance, but are promptly subdued.

HAKO (*aside bitterly*)

'Tis not the train described.—

Springed ever fowler's net the culprit bird?—

Spread for the daw the finch walks i' the mesh,

But vain our cunning when the finch we seek—

And vice-versa. (*cries aloud*) Here's rich booty,
ho!

Rifle them, rogues, and spare not,—then away.

[*Seats himself moodily on a stone.*

OLGAR (*haughtily*)

Fellow!—thou seem'st the captain of this band—

ELFRIDA (*interrupting with a cry*)

Rude robber, nay!—thou shalt not, villain—

Help ho!—my jewels—

[*Struggling with an OUTLAW attempting to despoil her.*

OLGAR.

Furies and hell!—A slave's polluting touch

Affront my daughter?— [Starts toward her.

HAKO (*blocking him*)

Imperious noble, pause!—Thou shalt have cause
else

To curse thy rashness.—

[*Detains OLGAR.—At this juncture another horn winds shrilly at a little distance.—The robbers, startled, drop their prey for a moment,—whereupon the Earl, nobles and attendants take advantage of the interruption and attack them,—the ladies in the party*

fleeing to the woods on one side of the highway. A desperate hand-to-hand conflict ensues:—HAKO attacks OLGAR, but old INA, the steward, throws himself in front of his master and is mortally wounded—he falls unobserved to one side. Suddenly loud shouting and clattering of hoofs is heard:—then enter ATHELWOLD, ALFRED, OFFA and retinue, dismounting and attacking the OUTLAWS from all sides.—The priest OFFA pitches on HAKO and tears him from OLGAR, who is hard pressed.—The OUTLAWS resist valiantly for a while, but being outnumbered, soon break and flee—HAKO being the last to go.

OLGAR (*loftily*)

Noble and valorous friends!—pursue them not.—
The law-contemning rout is foiled and vanquished,

Thanks to your succoring arms, and 'tis enough:
Who needless hazard runs dotes on his heir,
But clogs encomium's mouth with dubious matter. (*a scream comes from the woods*)

My God!—what cry was that?—Hear, hear!

(*other cries*)

Oh!—'tis her voice—my child, my child, my child!—

O fatal, fatal sense of false security!

Help, nobles, help!

New danger threatens, instant and extreme.

ATHELW.

Ho!—A sally, a sally!

[Rushes out, followed by all save OFFA.]

OFFA (*after a pause*)

Kind meddler, Chance!—how brought'st thou this to pass?

The Earl himself!—as yet he knows me not—

But, mass!—I need not fear—I've saved his life,—

Ha, ha!—With proper emphasis I'll press that home,

And it must somewhat boot in the deep tangle Which Offa must unravel. (*listening, he laughs aloud*) Bellow, bellow!—

Some Roman* arm amain drags hence his daughter,

And loud he begs that late opposed pursuit.

Marry!—a plain lesson in mut'ability:—

Ere words half-uttered break the laggard lips Their import may be false to our changed purpose—

So much are we the slaves of Circumstance, Impotent to forestall, control or change— With that, like shelving sands, each hour shifting.

What lies there?

[INA groans—OFFA goes over to him.

INA (*faintly*)

Sweet friend, a drop of water!

OFFA (*peering down at him*)

Offa, art thou awake?

'Tis Ina—the steward Ina—Ina wounded—

Ina! — Ina! — Ina! (*slowly and with intense hatred*)

*Roman arm—i. e., an arm that rapes—an allusion to the Sabines.

And why not Ina near his master's person?
 List!—they return. (*rearing up*) No!—'tis a distant shout,
 And travels in pursuit.—We'll have ample leisure
 Here to despatch some business, steward Ina!—
 Faith!—yes, to close accounts. (*laughs loudly*)
 Hast fainted? (*shakes INA*)
 Dear comely steward, dost thou ken these features? (*stoops*)
 Feel here—thy murd'rous hand 'twas limned them thus,
 While thy old cheek's smooth as the silken beard
 Which covers it.—But soon, sweet Ina,
 The worms will wanton in't—full soon, sweet steward.
[He draws a dagger.]

INA.

Help! Help!

OFFA.

Presently.

Apprise me first, how fares thy youthful spouse,—
 The tender sweetheart of thy dotage, she
 Whom others kiss and fondle?—Hist!
 I'll tell thee something. [Whispers to INA.]

INA.

No, no, no, no!—Thy arts were vain—
 False, baffled villain, I believe thee not!
 Reeking with admonition, oft priests at heart
 Are black as Lucifer.—Thou com'st to murder
 me—(*half-raising himself*)
 Thy purpose well I know:—I prithee, strike!
 Thus I defy thee. [Spits in OFFA'S face.]

Scene I.

THE FAITHLESS FAVORITE.

OFFA (*not heeding it*)

That was on a Monday.—I'll tell thee more.

[Whispers again.]

INA (*inarticulately*)

My—master?—O sweet saint in Heaven!—
That thou wert quick, to brand this devil's lies.
But she was pure—O!—she was pure.—Thou liest.
Once more I bid thee strike.

OFFA.

Why, she did, she did!—Wasn't not I confessed
her?

She did and will again:—'tis woman's nature.

INA.

There thou art foiled at least—she's dead and
buried.

What sound was that?—They come, thank God!
—they come—

My master?—No, no, no!—Help!—Help!

[*Sounds from a distance.*]

OFFA.

True, they come!

Take thy quietus then and parley elsewhere:—
Though fain I'd sit and watch thee slower die.

[*Stabs INA.*]

INA (*shrieks*)

Is there a God!

[*Dies.*]

OFFA (*contemplating the body*)

Thou canst look into that matter at thy leisure,
Impious wretch!—Th' infidel's death comes timely—

The fact is plain—his lordship must believe't—
An outlaw's hand hath slain him!—

And that 'twas God's own judgement he should perish,

Needs not much eloquence t' impress upon him
When all the rest escape.—But they approach.

(*sounds nearer*)

Methinks a gash or two came not amiss,
To rivet credence to my desp'rate story.

Let me play well my part—so—(*scratches himself*). Man's a coin,

With heads a fool, perdy, and tails a knave,
And howsoe'er we roll, why, marry, look you,
We needs must turn up one of these twain vis-
ages:—

Run what career one will, in his collisions
With other men, these are the possibilities.

I like not—heads!—What the devil's yonder? (*in the act of seating himself he jumps up excitedly*)

Offa, thou'rt lost!—Flee, flee!—Thou art undone!
Two figures, grim and stark,
Stand motionless as rooted to the ground,
Their eyes in horror glued upon my face—
Oh!—they have seen the deed. (*he runs out but immediately re-enters*)

Hah—silent still?—Could I but muster courage!—
No sound?—'tis strange—belike they're not of
earth!

No move? (*advancing*)—Pah, pah!—Gird up thy
loins, vile coward,

And front them though it mean annihilation!

(*going over to the figures, he laughs hoarsely*)

Two peasants, bound and gagged—real outlaws'
handiwork—

Scene II.

THE FAITHLESS FAVORITE.

O pallid fear!—no more.—But they know all!—
All quotha?

The problem's simple,—presto!—the solution.

[*Kills the PEASANTS,—then as OLGAR'S party is about to re-enter he runs hurriedly over to where the first conflict occurred, and falls prone.—The curtain descends, but almost immediately rises on the next scene.*

ACT III, SCENE II.—The same.

Enter OLGAR, ATHELWOLD, ALFRED, ELFrida, ELFWINE, etc. — Excited chatter marks this entry, with frequent O's and other feminine exclamations: — ELFrida and ELFWINE relating the episode.

OLGAR.

Ingratitude is monstrous in a man,
But doubly hateful in the gentle sex,
In whose quick-thrilling and responsive bosom
Nature hath planted subtler sensibilities:—
Those truly human qualities which vibrate
Like an old viol, sweetly through life's discords;
And she is false to all we love as woman
Who 'gainst their influence steels her renegade
breast.

(to ELF.R.) Hast thou no words to thank thy
brave deliverer?—

Thou pratest much but seem'st in this remiss.

ATHELW.

My lord, my lord!

ELF. (*embarrassed*)

Sweet Heaven,
Rain down thy choicest benisons on him!—
On him—on *all* who dare heroic deeds.

OLGAR.

How thou dost stint thy words!—Tut, tut,—a
penny
Tossed to the cringing cripple at his gate
Would earn him this—and more, and more, and
more.

ATHELW.

Oh!—chide her not, since what the full heart
feels
The eye betrays—and youth is apt to read.

ELFWINE (*aside*)

Whoa, whoa!—conceit, I prithee:—woman's eyes
Bear texts vain men mis-spell.

ELF.

What can I say!—Too noble and too kind!—
Wear this—thou'l honor me.

[*Giving ATHELW. a token.*

ATHELW.

The donor's image, dazzling and beautiful!
Sweet lady, I thank thee. [*Kissing the gem.*

OLGAR (*abruptly*)

Where's Ina?—God grant he hath not perished!

ATHELW.

Where's Offa? [To his train.]

OLGAR.

What Offa?—The priest Offa?—Know ye him?

ATHELW.

Ask'st thou that?—He saved your lordship's life.

Scene II.

THE FAITHLESS FAVORITE.

OLGAR.

Zounds!—was that Offa?—No.

ALFRED.

Truly it was!—A worthy man and valiant—
These eyes too saw the deed.

ELF.

What black figure rises yonder?—Oh, oh!

[OFFA comes painfully forward.]

OLGAR.

'Tis he!—the very man—I recognize him:—
When the fierce bandit's arm, uplift to strike,
Was brushed aside this figure interposed.
But Offa!—
The lewd priest banished for atrocities—
How reconcile him with a worthy deed?
How, tocc, came he among ye? (*turns to OFFA*)
Ungodly priest, didst thou indeed this service?
Oh!—speak and lift the burden of my soul—
Come, come!—deny it—there's a douceur for
thee: (*offering something*)
I would be grateful to a worthy man.

OFFA (*weeping*)

Oh, still deceit imposeth on good nature!
Oh, still an old man's lies find ready credence!
[*Mutters prayers in bad Latin.*]

OLGAR (*roughly*)

Come thy ways, sir priest!—thy ways.

ATHELW.

Oh!—hear him patiently.

OFFA (*half aloud, as if to himself*)

No, no, no!—Sweet conscience, urge me not!
O Jesu, spare me this most bitter trial!

Oh!—strike me dumb, or let me die this instant,
That I may ne'er reveal his wickedness. (*louder*)
O base, base, basest of men!

[*More prayers in bad Latin.*

OLGAR.

Hypocrite, what hast thou to reveal?
Whom canst *thou* term base?

OFFA.

Your lordship then suspects naught?—Tell me
that—

Ambushed so near thy castle—none suspected?

No!

'Twas but an accident, this ambuscade—not
plotted

By a fell traitor in your lordship's service—

Purblind benevolence, how art thou deceived!

None knew your lordship brought rich treasure
home? (*aside*)

His color changes—hah—most happy guess!

OLGAR (*aside*)

What bodes this?—Ina knew't, of all my train,
And he alone,—who bear the chest, deceived
At my instruction, deem old armor in't. (*to ATTENDANTS*)

Caitiffs!—where lies your burden?

TWO ATTEND.

Here, your lordship.

OLGAR.

Still guard it well, sith thus ye guard your lives.
Who thy informer, priest?—Explain the mystery.
Ho!—where's the steward?—Ina, stand forth!

AN ATTEND. (*from a distance*)

My Lord, my Lord!—He lies here foully murdered.

ELFWINE.

Horror, horror!

ELF.

Most bloody, ruthless deed!

OLGAR (*staggered*)

Ina lies dead?—Mine ancient steward dead?

OFFA (*quickly*)

But Olgar lives—Almighty God, thou reign'st!

(*to ATTEND.*)

Dotard!—thou found'st one corse—where are thine eyes?

What's by yon gnarled oak? [Pointing.

ATTEND. (*running thither*)

Two peasants bound — alack! — two corpses rather—

See, see, my lord!—Though bolt upright, both dead:—

Walder and Scagg, methinks—(*examining them*) ay, ay—

I knew them well. [Cuts the bodies loose.

OFFA (*chanting*)

Power Supreme, that launched the universe,

And pois't it in thy palm—

How wondrous are thy ways,

Mysterious, awful and profound!—

As these extinct attest

Who, plotting treason to despoil their master,

Condignly perished through their own designs:—

*All in the midst of their dark plottings overthrown,
 As by a thunder-clap;—and now exposed—
 A spectacle, though mean, of wrath divine—
 Their destined victim views unscathed and sound—
 Unscathed and sound since by Omnipotence
 guarded!* [All this on his knees.]

OLGAR.

What means this ecstasy?—Thou movest me strangely.

How came these by their death?

OFFA (*approaching OLGAR*)

Oh!—canst thou be so blind, too generous Earl,
 As not to fathom this same ambuscade?
 'Twas Ina plotted all,—and his accomplices—
 Poor hinds that led the outlaws to the spot—
 Conveniently detained, their service done—
 Thou seest:—by Ina slain to balk discovery
 When all miscarried and the robbers fled.
 How swift thereon, like echo to a shout,
 Vengeance recoiled on Ina!—Like a tiger
 New-caged, which dire mischance doth set at large,

The raging chief returned,—
 His bloody choler fanned to frenzy's pitch
 When Ina bandied charge with counter-charge.
 Soon mutual curses brought the blade in play,
 With what result ye see:—this witnessed I,
 And overheard—the rest broached Ina's lips—
 Gasping repentance as his life-blood ebbed
 He told me all, then died unshrived and lost;

For he, alas!—was excommunicate
By Dunstan's mandate. [Produces a placard.]

OLGAR.

Priest, is this true?—Before thy God, is't true?

OFFA.

So help me—Christ—it is. (*twists in pain*) Oh,
for a vul'nary

To ease these wounds!—I' faith, the savage varlet
Aimed at thy heart, my lord, a trenchant blade!
'Twas he, the very miscreant whom these arms,
In broils ill-versed, plucked from your lordship's
throat

In the first brush, that later slew the steward.—
Ah, gracious daughter, bless thee!

[ELF. binds up his wounds.]

A NOBLE (*rudely*)

Fables charm youth and specious tales gull
women:—

When what thou tell'st transpired where, priest,
wast thou?

OFFA.

Sooth, by good hap

Faint on the ground from loss of blood, in pain
Helpless I lay and still.

THE NOBLE (*scornfully*)

Sooth, by good hap!

OLGAR (*reprovingly*)

Oft is suspicion cast on worthiest deeds
By fools and knaves, in flippant slur and sneer,—

But disingenuous doubts fly generous minds.

'Tis by our conscience that we judge our kind,
And what the knave knows of his peccant past

Breeds in his heart the fear of fraud and guile,
 Haunts his low thoughts and mars his views of
 men:

And safely ye may deem this axiomatic—
 Thrice-false himself is he who all mistrusts.

(turns to OFFA)

Priest, I believe thee,—Olgar's eyes are opened—
 Thy Master's hand writes visibly and plain,—

(crossing himself)

Yea!—He hath stooped to vindicate his servant,
 Accused unjustly of an heinous deed:—

She died that then accused thee, and now this!—
 Can cavilling doubt ask more convincing proof?
 Oh!—take these jewels, noble, wronged man,
 And say a mass for Olgar's criminal folly. (giving presents)

Soon rich rewards shall follow:—ha, thanes, hear me! (raising his hand)

South from yon elm that tops the somber wood,
 A thousand acres stretch of copse and plain—
 All these I dedicate and devote to God,
 As a memorial of a grateful heart;—
 A stately abbey soon shall grace the scene,
 And thou, good Offa, shalt be abbot certes,
 If influence can aught procure for merit,
 And meanwhile Olgar's castle is thy home.
 No words! (turns away) To horse, my lords, to horse!

Day wanes apace.

Lord Athelwold, thou'l learn to know us better
 In mine own house—thou and thy knightly train—

And shalt relate at length, when leisure offers,

How thou didst chance to come so opportunely.

What say'st, Elfrida—is he welcome there?

ELF.

Oh!—if his stay's proportioned to his welcome,
His days are like to end there.

ATHELW.

Sweet doom!—sweet end!—Yet, lady, I'd not
die there,

For, went thy guest to Heaven,
He'd scarcely feel the joy of the transition!

AN ATTEND. (*as the party breaks up*)

What's to be done with yon carrion, good my
lord? [Indicating the bodies.]

OLGAR (*vehemently*)

Cast them on a dung-hill!

Or in some ditch where stagnant waters mingle—
There let them rot—perfidious, justly slain!

ATHELW. (*aside to OFFA.*)

Art satisfied?—Say, is my mission done?

OFFA (*aside*)

God bless thee!—

Youth, it is—keep thine own counsel, sweet lord!
I'll tell all in a cartel writ to Dunstan.

[*Exeunt omnes—horns blowing, nobles calling
for their steeds, etc.*

ACT III, SCENE III.—An open tower on the battlements of OLGAR'S castle.—Midnight.—*Music and sounds of revelry from the banquet-hall.*—A sentry making his rounds appears and disappears.

Enter ATHELWOLD from below.

ATHELW.

Here let me breathe—the revel's at its height—
 Blow on these temples, winds! (*disheveling his locks*)—hah—how the music swells!

And she—zounds!—fool, what dost thou here?—
 Back, back!

Return apace and mar some coxcomb's bliss,
 Who throbs and tingles 'neath her favoring
 glance—(*turns abruptly but pauses*)

But no, no, no!—Thou'rt half distracted now—
 Unhappy Athelwold, what wouldest thou there?
 O King, King, King!—O fatuous King and blind!
 What evil genius bade thee send me hither,
 When any monk, soul-mummied, sere and cold,
 Had served the turn? (*throws himself at length*)

Sweet lenitive midnight winds,
 From your cool caves waft Athelwold repose,—
 Flung on this flag supine, perchance I'll sleep,
 And so forget—the morrow soon will dawn,
 And then—ah!—then I'll fly the cursed place,
 And tell my Prince how *wondrous*, *WONDROUS* fair
 —(*starts up*)

Oh!—should that huntsman dine who sends the
 hound

An-hungered forth to fetch the leveret home?
 He hath done this—my soul's aflame with love,
 And I have never loved that deemed all lovely:—
 Near-glaring rush-lights quench the distant
 stars—

So present counterfeits dim illustrious worth,
 So vile fruition mars the soul's ideals. (*breaks
 into an apostrophe*)

O ye ages! O entombed time past record!

O all ye climes where mortals toil and weep!
 O human heart! O virgin, dreaming
 With the first kiss still dewy on thy cheek!—
 Can any solve me this—How love is born?
 Love!—the prime impulse, the eternal bond
 Which welds and knits the brotherhood of man
 Into an harmonious world,
 Unutterably grand though various-working!—
 Under whose influence men approach high
 Heav'n,
 In god-like virtue and self-sacrifice,
 Yet oft out-vle e'en fiends in hellish deeds—
 As passion or the pure ideal prevails!
 Ay me!—(a noise below) who comes?—The
 damned occasion— [Turns his back.
Enter OFFA from below.

OFFA.

My son, say, art thou ill? All marked thy exit,
 And she, the queen, the beauteous—

ATHELW. (*turning on him savagely*)

Omen accursed! A palsy still thy tongue!

OFFA (*tranquilly*)

My lord, my lord!

ATHELW.

Well, what of her?—What of the QUEEN Elfrida?
 What dost thou know?—O subtle, subtle priest!

OFFA (*aside*)

This hath some meaning—Queen?—Hah—
 What if it be?

The King's a gallant monarch—who more fair?
 (aloud)

My lord, I will retire—I fear thy anger.

Heaven mend thee!

[*Going.*

ATHELW.

Stay!

What said she—what does she?—Looked she after me?

Good father, answer!—Pardon these rude lips:
Beshrew me, but I meant not what I said.

[*Coming to OFFA.*

OFFA (*coldly*)

Good night, my lord!

[*Descending.*

ATHELW. (*clutching him*)

Peccavi, father!—Go not from me thus—

Oh, I have need of ghostly counsel, father!—
My thoughts malign urge on to wicked deeds.

OFFA.

Be brief, my son: what hast thou to confess?

ATHELW.

Lies, lies!

[*Beating his breast.*

OFFA.

Peace!—thou wast born of woman.

[*Going.*

ATHELW.

Oh!—their design is treason to my King.

OFFA (*stops*)

How to thy King?—What trust hast to betray?

ATHELW.

Exceeding trust—his heart, his suit, his hopes!

OFFA.

Speak not in riddles:—Edgar acts through Dunstan.

Scene III.

THE FAITHLESS FAVORITE.

ATHELW.

But this another kind of envoy fits:—

Oh, list!—in brief, he means to wed Elfrida.

OFFA.

Wed, didst thou say—or bed, like other lemans?

Cloisters themselves yield spoil for his amours.

ATHELW.

Wed as his Queen!—'Tis therefore I am here—

The other matter was a mere pretext:—

She fills his heart whose face he ne'er beheld.

OFFA (*energetically*)

No, no!—

I tell thee, no!—As well stretch forth thy palm,
And when it rains bid all the drops fall in't,
As bid an old volupt'ary love one woman:—
Wand'ring desires burn on unchastened ever,
And sure she's mad that trusts the rake's profes-
sions,—

Reforming — yea! — when impotent days draw
nigh.

ATHELW.

Hah!

OFFA.

Say not she fills his heart, thou simple boy,
But say he lusts anew and seeks fruition,
Like any dog.—Why dost thou gnash thy teeth?

ATHELW.

Thy words like daggers trench most bitter
thoughts.

OFFA (*smiling*)

Ho!—is't not true,—thou lovest Elfrida, son?

Combustible youth!—So soon?

ATHELW.

Alas!

[*He turns away.*

OFFA.

What man courts ruin where no prize doth tempt?

ATHELW.

Tempt!

OFFA.

Ill-starred is he whose rival wears a crown.

ATHELW. (*fiercely*)

He's but a man!—Mischance and death rule all!

OFFA.

Bold words! Bold heart!—God help thy master's suit.

ATHELW.

Ay, it is treason thus to speak my mind.

OFFA.

But none are privy to it—nor thy mission.

ATHELW.

Nay, nay! I have dissembled well and lied.

OFFA.

Thou art absolved:—who lies not when in love?

ATHELW.

Now, out on thee!—What canst thou know of love?

OFFA.

Heigh-ho, my lord!—Who hears the maid's lament?

ATHELW.

True, true!—Desire is fruitful in misdeeds.

OFFA.

Take twenty death-beds and confess them all,
And of the score full nineteen sinned for love.

ATHELW.

Oh!—that strikes home—O faithless Athelwold!
Ay me, ay me!—Passion, whither dost hale me?

OFFA.

Softly, softly!—What mem'ries prompt these
words?

ATHELW.

A mortal sin rests heavy on my soul.

OFFA (*laughing*)

Nay, tell me no more—no more. Eh, boy, eh, boy!
Thou lovedst some girl i' the wild way—what
then?

Moths that flutter round the flame of lech'ry
Are oft consumed thereby—'tis their own look-
out.

Come, come, descend and I'll give ear to it—
See, we are not alone—be careful—so.

Take counsel with thy friend when doubts op-
press thee:

Two heads will find a way in weightiest troubles.

[*They go down.*

Enter an OLD SENTRY.

OLD SENTRY (*sulkily*)

Ay, get ye down, wassailers, get ye down! Feast
and drink your bellyful, and a bloody tormina
to ye! As for me, tramp, tramp in a circle over
your heads the livelong night, with never a
drop of aqua vitae!—But scratch a blain, raise
a botch, Ludovic:—he who pothers himself un-

duly over petty discomforts shall find them grow apace—so be content. (*sings*)

*"Bury him, bury him, bury him deep!
From Hell one mass his soul will keep."*—
*The holy man looked stern—
Quoth the widow gay,
"Naught, naught I'll pay,—
So let the goodman burn!"*

[Exit SENTRY, humming.]

ACT III, SCENE IV.—Before a dung-hill.—REDWALD stands beside it with a bloody knife and INA'S heart in his hands.—The steward's body, bloated and disfigured, lies half exposed.

RED.

Poor Ina!—So 'tis, so 'tis—the sorcerer stole the ring and buried it in a heart—ha, ha!—in his heart, but Redwald finds it. (*holding it up with insane gestures and grimaces of exultation*) Sweet Elfrida! (*turns abruptly*) No, old friar o' the dung-hill!—thou liest,—I never murdered thee. Turn on thy side and sweat out thy dropsy, like Heraclitus.* Heraclitus, Heraclitus, Heraclitus!—the whole world's mad, Heraclitus. [Exit.]

*Heraclitus of Ephesus (535-475, B. C.), the weeping philosopher, attacked with dropsy in his old age, asked the physicians in a riddle whether or not they could produce a drought after wet weather. They not understanding him, the philosopher in disgust shut himself up in a stable for oxen, and covered himself with dung, hoping that the heat thereof might cause the water to evaporate. It is needless to add that he died.

ACT III, SCENE V.—The bower of ELFrida.—
ATHELWOLD with ELFrida—ELFWINE a
little aloof from them.

ELF. (*yawning*)

Heigh-ho! Elfwine, some music—
Sing me a love-song, girl,—come.

ATHELW.

With thy leave, sweet lady—nay, but let me.

[Takes an instrument and sings.

SONG.

*From her ee bright and tender
Flashed a glance into mine,
And the orb's ebon splendor
Hath doomed me to pine.
So suddenly chanced it
I knew not 'twas done,
And time since enhanced it—
Ache, heart, till she's won!
Oh! I love her, I love her,
This maiden divine,—
And, by Jesu above her,
Her bane shall be mine!*

ELF. (*coquettishly*)

Pretty, pretty. Where learned you this bold song,
My lord?

ATHELW. (*sighing*)

Thine eyes are black, lady.

ELF.

Indifferent black, my lord—now, Elfwine!

[The maid plays and sings.

SONG.

*His soft phrases won her,
And now she's undone:
Forsaken, all shun her—
She's lost, and for one
Whose false vows another
Hears breathed in her ear—
Oh, why did her mother
Not strangle her dear!
Beware then, O maiden!—
Who tempts thee destroys,
And oft poison-laden
Are innocent joys.*

[ELF. joins in the last lines.

ELF.

Alack, what frowns, my lord!—The song displeases?

ATHELW.

No, no! Her voice is shrill—too high, too thin.
Good Heavens! I hate a thin and squeaky treble!
[With unnecessary vehemence, turning away.

ELF. (*laughing*)

There Elfwine!

ELFWINE (*with a toss*)

Oh, madam!—
Pardon me, ah—why—humph—indeed! (*checks herself*)

I'll go feed the throstle, with your leave:
Poor bird, unpreened it languishes without.
(*aside*)

Ill fortune blight thy hopes, thou saucy thane!

ELF.

Go, girl.

[*Exit ELFVIN.*

ATHELW.

It must be, must, must, must! Down treason,
down!

He's mad who knows his fate yet moves contrary.

(*aloud abruptly*)

Lady! The King—

[*Stops confusedly.*

ELF. (*demurely*)

Hunts wolves, my lord?

ATHELW.

What art thou saying?—When last I saw the
King

'Twas—'twas—

ELF.

At court, my lord?

ATHELW. (*with a violent effort*)

I am charged to tell ye that the King—

The King, dost understand?—the King himself!—

[*Impressively.*

ELF. (*gayly*)

Gets drunk, my lord?

ATHELW. (*aside*)

She will not understand! Or is't pure levity
So aptly foils my speech?—Now, on my soul!
I'll take another tack—priest, speed thy counsel!

(*kneels*)

O lady, canst thou love?

[*Passionately seizing ELFREDA'S hands.*

ELF.

My lord, thou dost presume. Ho, Elfwine, Elfwine!
 [ATHELW. rises and turns away.
Re-enter ELFVIN.

ELFWINE.

Madam, your pleasure?

ELF. (*agitated—plucking a flower*)

Why, indeed, Elfwine—I—did call thee—only—
 (*brightening*)

Is the bird fed?

There be some dainties I bespoke for him
 Of the page— (*hesitating—glancing furtively at*
 ATHELW.) Roger—thou know'st little Roger?
 Go fetch them, Elfwine.—Will you sit, my lord?
 [To ATHELW., who is going—he stops.

ELFWINE (*serenely*)

Roger is dead a twelvemonth, madam.

ELF. (*with a start*)

Dead didst thou say?—Indeed, ah!—very true—
 'Twas with these hands that I did plant the violets

Grow on his grave—how strange I could forget!
 Pshaw!—mischievous Hamnet was the page I
 meant,—

Couldst thou not guess it?—But run away, girl—
 Go, find the thrush some chickweed.

[Exit ELFVIN.—*An outer door slams.* ELFRIDA takes up a piece of embroidery and fingers it nervously.

ATHELW. (*half audibly*)

How beautiful, how beautiful, how beautiful!
 None breathes beneath the wide, o'er-arching blue

That's fair as she.

Oh, there are flaws in inf'nite wisdom, God!

Since Thou mad'st women beautiful, men weak—
Or did the devil make ye,

Ye sirens of the world type, fair, false, fickle?

ELF. (*looking up*)

Did you speak, my lord?

ATHELW.

Oh, that I durst!—A heart surcharged had ease
then.

ELF. (*rallying him*)

Mine ears, what trick is this!—Or do I dream?
Alas for idols!

What, this a man, a thane, and say he durst not!
What not?

Daring is half the deed, Lord Athelwold,
Whate'er the game—and all the credit, certes!

ATHELW.

Nay, is it so?—Then heart, up with a vengeance!
[Seizes her in his arms.

ELFRIDA (*not angrily*)

Oh, fie, my lord!—fie, fie!—come, gently, thane!
This is bucolic wooing—I protest—
Indeed, indeed, I meant not to embolden thee!

[Disengaging herself.

ATHELW.

I love thee from my soul, superb Elfrida!

ELFRIDA (*demurely*)

Why, that's the song—but dost thou so, in sooth?
'Twas yesterday three nights agone we met.

(*a knock*)

Pshaw!—some one comes.

[*Aside.*

Re-enter ELFVIN.

ELFWINE (*smiling maliciously*)

Madam, his highness craves my lordship's presence

In the court below—to come without delay.

ELF.

Attend, my lord.

ATHELW.

O ill-timed summons!—Pregnant with what mischief?

But I'll hold parley with thy father, lady,
About some other matters in the interim
'Twixt this and our next meeting.

ELF. (*archly*)

Wilt thou so, indeed?—

My father is impatient, good my lord.

ATHELW.

But thou!

[*Exit ATHELW.*

ELF. (*flinging herself at length*)

I'm weary, Elfwine! Heigh-ho,—where's my mirror?

How do I look to-day?—Fetch me that footstool!

Twenty-one—two—three—pish!—twenty-four—

(*counting*)

Why, he's the twenty-fourth declared this summer!

How think'st thou, Elfwine, shall I marry him?

There is a boyish beauty in his face,—

A bashful blush suffused his new-razed cheeks

When he did speak of love—and heaved such sighs!

Mentioning the King's name oft to conjure with,
And grant assurance:—'lack, poor simple fellow!
What need of words?

I grasped it all at once,—trust woman's instinct
To guide her true in all pertains to men!—
The King hath chosen me to be his bride—
This Athelwold's, I mean—that would he tell me,
To speed his suit—he hath a place at court—
But how he stuttered in the declaration!
Half choking with his croupy sentences
When he would tell the King had played match-
maker.

But, faith!—I'm half inclined to take the favor-
ite—

Only he can't abide thy singing, Elfwine! (a
knock)

Oh!—he returns. (*jumping up*) Why, how now,
Hamnet?

Enter a PAGE.

PAGE (*excitedly*)

Lady Elfrida, there's a witch below!
Will ye not see the witch?

ELF.

Where's my kerchief, Elfwine?—Gracious, child,
Don't muss my hair!—Pull out that ringlet—so.
Oh, if thou'rt fooling, rascal! (*threatening*
PAGE) Come, Elfwine, follow! [Exeunt.

ACT III, SCENE VI.—A court in OLGAR'S castle.

Enter TWO SERVANTS, meeting.

FIRST SERV.

Who knocks without?

SEC. SERV.

One not related to wisdom—a woman. [Exit.

Enter OSBURGA in altercation with another SERV.

OSB. (*railing*)

Marry, no—I must not provoke you! You were a soldier once, quotha?—A soldier, forsooth!—What are soldiers? Idlers—vagabonds—drunkards! Zounds, sirs!—when they're not storming girls all they do is to lay siege to rum-casks. But you are a man and a soldier!—A man?—faugh!—Two-legged infection! Bray him with a pestle in a mortar, strain him, dry him, scatter his ashes on the four winds of Heaven—and wherever the least part of man falls there shall grow up nothing but sin, sin, sin! But I will see your master, mauger your soldiership—your master and his noble guests, sirrah, mind!

[*Seats herself.*

Re-enter SEC. SERV. with OLGAR.

OLGAR.

Where's the importunate crone?—How now, dame! What would ye?

OSB. (*courtesying*)

May't please your highness, I would see
Your noblest guest.

OLGAR.

Lord Athelwold, thou mean'st?—Call him, fellow.
[*Exit SERV.*

OSB. (*laughing*)

Marry, yes!—If that be his name, why, sooth!
'Tis him I seek.

OLGAR.

How?—Know'st thou not his name, yet must see him?

OSB. (*evasively*)

Why, is not his name Lord Athelwold, your grace?

OLGAR.

Thou had'st it from my lips—lo, he comes!

Enter ATHELWOLD and several others.

OSB. (*loudly*)

Thelwy! Thelwy! Thelwy!

ATHELW. (*angrily*)

Who calls me Thelwy?

OSB. (*aside*)

Thief! (*aloud*)

Cry you mercy, good my Lord Athelwold?

[*Courtesying.*]

ATHELW. (*to OLGAR*)

My lord, 'twas thou bespok'st attendance here—

Pray, wherefore? [OLGAR points to OSB.]

OSB. (*curtsying again*)

Oh, deem me not beneath your worship's notice!

Thy words imply't; but, handsome, high-born thane,

All things that breathe are equal in their essence,

Since all corrupt, corrupting or corruptible;—

And those distinctions dear to human hearts—

Fame, rank and fortune, in their several kinds,—

Convulse the gods with laughter—

As 'twould us, too, an some fantastic apes

Bedecked in scarlet, green or azure coats,

Strutting about in pride and contumely,
 Urged themselves better for that specious reason
 Than humbler monkeys clad in natural brown.
 Therefore hear me!

ATHELW.

How quick the low to brand impatience pride
 When their importunate suits annoy their bet-
 ters!

Upon our time, God knows, they have no claim,
 Yet must we hear each Andrew, nolens volens,
 Bray his ill-timed, long-winded suit or plaint—
 Or else we're contumelious. (*to OSB.*) What's the
 business?

OSB.

A boon unto the dying.

ATHELW.

What!—to ten thousand?

OSB. (*passionately*)

Oh, quibble not! Think of thine own death-bed!
 Be not obdurate—fear avenging fate.
 Oh, if thou dost refuse may devils mock thee
 In thine own agony!—And as thine eyes
 Slow glaze at length, urge thy descent to Hell
 With bitter curses and this just reproach:—
 Thou didst refuse compassion—be refused!
 Unhelpful to the dying—die thou hapless!

ATHELW.

Thou tragic quean, what am I to do?

OSB.

Come with me to my cave.

[A SERV. *whispers* OLGAR, *he* ATHELW.

ATHELW.

Why, art thou not a witch?

OSB. (*laughing disdainfully*)

Oh, courteous thane!

I'm not age-burdened, toothless, bent or buckled—
The classic ear-marks of the dubious character—
As thou canst see, yet have the name of witch—
God wot how won!

And have been beaten, baited, tried with ordeals
For crimes I've never dreamt of. Hear me, thane,
And I'll narrate to thee a late adventure
That is in point—oh, I'll be brief, my lord!—
Turn not away impatient. In a village
Near-by it chanced that, strolling forth at dusk
Companioned by my daughter, in the way
A puling child we met; and I, alack!
Unwisely sympathetic, to console it
Offered it sweet-meats—

Where'pon the weanling boy in wanton terror
O'er this old face and melancholic eye,
Or garb bizarre, or other trivial thing,
Ran screaming to its mother, chatt'ring wildly
Of bugabos, hob-goblins and what not,
And that same night—such are the tricks of fate,
Officious still to plague us—
O'er-fed, unpurged, coddled into distemper,
As mothers wont—event how common, mark!—
The child expired in spasms.

Enter ELFRIDA, ELFWIN, PAGE and others.

ATHELW.

What's all this to the purpose?—

Lord Olgar, prithee, bide one moment.

[*Turning to him.*

OSB.

Sooth, in popular clamor, good my lord, its death
 Lies at the "witch's" door:—I was arraigned,
 troth,
 And tried, too—but the good judge had discre-
 tion!—
 I'm somewhat poorer for't.—My lord attends
 still?

ATHELW. (*impatiently*)

Yes, yes!—but finish. Your lordship, pardon me
 —(*to OLGAR*)

Pray, go not far: faith, I have themes of moment
 Demand deep conf'rence. Wilt thou grant it me?

OLGAR.

Certes, thane.

OSB. (*clutches ATHELW.*)

Against thy will thou'st heard an idle tale—
 The rest, young thane, thou know'st too—thine
 eyes witnessed it—

Look not astonished—have I ta'en those eyes
 From the fair lady's face? I'll prod thy mem'ry:
 The murd'rous mob, all cowed and held at bay
 By one now dying—dost thou not remember?

ATHELW. (*cordially*)

Right well I do. Ah!—that was then thy daugh-
 ter?

Intrepid girl!—And thou seek'st alms for her?
 There's for thee, too. (*thrusting money on her*)
 Good friends, be generous!

Now, my Lord Olgar—an hour in privacy.

[*Would lead him away.*

OSB. (*spurning the gift*)

Oh, not so fast! 'Twas not thy gold I sought,

Nor shalt thou thus dismiss me:
 She asks but once to look upon thy face—
 This—girl!—Thou save'dst her, as she did me.

ATHELW. (*with ill-grace*)

Well, well!—If that my lord will grant permission,
 Abide thou here, and in an hour's time
 Mayhap I'll go with thee, for thy persistence.

OLGAR.

Let her remain; 'tis well. Come, thane!

[*Exeunt OLGAR and ATHELWOLD.*

OSB. (*grimly*)

I thank ye, nobility! [Seats herself.

ELFWINE (*eagerly*)

Art really a witch?

PAGE (*eagerly*)

Where's thy besom?

ELFWINE.

Canst raise spirits?—No!

ELFRIDA.

Or read futures?

PAGE.

Do, if thou durst—and tell which lord my lady means to wed, anyway! There's a crown for thee. [Offering money.

ELF. (*boxing his ears*)

And there's a mark for thee, malapert!
 I'll have thee whipped.

[As they crowd round OSBURGA, all chattering at the same time, the scene closes on them.

ACT III, SCENE VII.—OSBURGA'S cave.—
ATHELWOLD and ROWENA there, he lying on
the ground all amort—she standing over him
with a child in her arms.

ATHELW.

Away, thou evil dream—away, away!

[Buries his face in his hands.]

ROW.

Pitiless monster! Perfidy incarnate!

This, this—to me!

[She weeps.]

ATHELW.

Didst thou not lure me hither with a lie?

O the damned witch! How cunningly she fabled!

ROW.

Unknown to me her Heav'n-inspired design.

But dost thou talk of lies? O sweet babe, answer
him!

Look on this face—and darest thou talk of lies?

Lo!—it is thine:—this eye, this brow, this lip
All tell of lies and vows thou erstwhile utteredst,
What time thou robb'dst me of mine innocence.

(the child whines)

Hush, hush, my babe! It is not thee I chide—

Born like a rat in this dank, darksome cave.

Thy father's noble—but who knows his fate?

Alas!—thou hast no father, tender innocent:—

Black looks, reproaches and half-uttered curses,—

Thy mother's welcome,—what canst thou expect?

Nor is't so many moons since last we parted,

And then love's tenderness was in full gush—

O Thelwy, Thelwy!—is then all forgotten?

[Sinks down beside him in a paroxysm of grief.]

ATHELW. (*involuntarily fondling her*)

Oh, weep not, weep not! I too am miserable—

Storm if thou wilt, but, prithee, dry thine eyes.

ROW.

Forlorn, the wretch abandoned to her grief

This comfort finds—but men must chide who
wrong:—

Loth to behold the flow of chastening tears,

Yet cheerful authors still of all our woe.

ATHELW.

How cam'st thou here, by all that's strange and
wonderful?

ROW.

Thee seeking, by untimely misadventure.

ATHELW.

Thou had'st a home—say, why didst thou forsake
it?

ROW.

Thou had'st a wife—say, why didst thou forsake
her?

ATHELW.

Subjects obey when monarchs summon them.

ROW.

But husbands too *sometimes* regard their vows!

ATHELW.

Couldst thou not trust me, waiting my return?

ROW.

How live?—On roots and berries, air and sun-
light?

Other provision mad'st thou for me none.

ATHELW.

Oh!—youth's e'er negligent—charge not that a
crime.

ROW.

And yet 'tis murder when neglect costs life.

ATHELW.

Thou liv'st—say then, whose life was jeopardized?

ROW.

Thy child's and mine:—like dogs are whelped, its birth.

ATHELW.

Oh, but 'tis strange!—'Tis passing strange, all this!

ROW.

Strange things are wont to chance to maids, once married.

ATHELW.

Zounds! There's a fardel of surprises too In store for men.

ROW.

All's well that leaves life! Take me to thy castle.

ATHELW. (*frenzied*)

'Tis not my castle—'tis not my castle—'tis not my castle!

ROW.

Oh!—wilt thou not take me thither Where Osburga found thee?

ATHELW.

I cannot, cannot! Never, never!

ROW.

O Thelwy, speak! Am I wedded to thee at all?

ATHELW.

God and my misery witness it!—thou art.

ROW.

But wilt thou not take me with thee, heart-mate?

ATHELW.

God!—no—anon, anon—not now, not now.
Canst not understand?

ROW.

Thou mean'st never—thon mean'st never—
Thou mean'st never!

[Swoons—ATHELWOLD catching the child, puts it on the ground and, standing over the twain, bitterly soliloquizes:]

ATHELW.

Now am I in the hell of mine own making,
And bottomless seems th' abyss to my stunned soul.

O villain, vers'tile villain!—what canst thou do?
False to thy King, thy mistress and thy wife,
False to thyself, thy conscience and thy God!—
How walk'st erect, nor blush'st before the sun?
No meaner thing than thee it warms that crawls!

(the child cries—he takes it up)

“Thy father's noble”—Oh, cruel mockery!
There hangs no blacker felon on a gibbet
This night in England.

Oh!—she's too good, too tender, and too true
To tell the tale—how mild her just reproaches!

(he kisses the child and lays it down)

Go, baffled passion!—quench thyself in rage,
Or peter out in womanish complaint—
Thy course is run, thou shalt seduce no more.
Brought to full stop in evil, high career,
Now outraged fate doth hale me to accompt

For my misdeeds, long-standing and accumulating,

And will not be denied:—farewell, Elfrida!

She's lost—the dearest object of desire!—

Accursed priest!—but stop—this fault was earlier,—

Thou canst on no one shift responsibility.

Why did I leave her?—By my soul, I know not—

But love will pall with too much tenderness,

And stint of kiss means thrift of bliss to dames.

Insensibly my absence was prolonged,

Though ever planning, promising return,

And this is now the fruit.—What will I do?

Would that the priest were here!—the cloth's resourceful.

Can I retrace my steps? Two hours ago

Lord Olgar promised me Elfrida's hand—

Hard, selfish heart!—hadst thou been soft and pitiful

I had eschewed that pitfall:—now my sky

Is black and lowering with disgrace and ruin—

That sky that seemed so fair, Elfrida plighted—

Stol'n from the King,—but, ah!—'twas greater peril.

Oh, I've been mad!—perchance kind angels guard me.

Retreat's the remedy—'tis in my power—

Oh, brave confusion! Say, for the King thou woo'dst—

Few words—oh!—very few, will serve the purpose,

Agreeable, methinks, to Olgar's ears.

This done, thou canst face Edgar without fear—

Thy Prince will scarce begrudge thee a few kisses,

E'en learn he all—nor take thy heat amiss,
Since thou canst swear 'twas but to prove her virtue.

This course adopt or, if thou canst not, die!
Rowena, dear Rowena, thou hast conquered.

(kneeling)

God!—she is gone—no, 'tis a woman's swoon—
Her heart beats feebly. O thou pallid form!
I saw thee last all flushed with blooming life,
And now how changed!—Christ knows her sufferings.

Enter OSBURGA.

OSB.

What hast thou done, my lord—what hast thou done? [Hastening to the prostrate form.

ATHELW. (roughly)

Peace, crone!—She lives—she stirs and 'gins to wake.

Oh, I must hence!—There's for her keep—(giving money) more waits thee—

Look well to her!—thou shalt lose naught by it.
Full soon I'll send and take her hence—perchance

This eve.—Hark thou, give her this comfort.

OSB. (clinging to him)

Wilt thou indeed, my lord—wilt thou indeed?

ATHELW.

Oh, damn *thee!*

[Shakes her off and exit. Scene ends.

ACT III, SCENE VIII.—A hall in OLGAR'S castle.

Enter OFFA.

OFFA.

'Tis thus the matter stands:—he weds the wench,
But Offa holds a mortgage on her dowry. (*pulls
forth a paper*)

Castles and lands all pledged and pawned—as
earnest

What money he could raise and jeweled trifles,
He hath disgorged already. (*pulls out jewels*)
All this for aiding his unlawful suit
By counsel, hints, advice in the confessional,
And other ways in which the priest's adept.
Oh, my advancement's certain!

Money's the pap our Holy Church waxed fat on,*
And robbing priests are still her best loved
sons:—

See, Offa, see the stepping-stone to power! (*pro-
ducing money*)

Thou'rt abbot promised—zounds!—and why not
bishop?

Mass, Dunstan's shoes look not too big for me,
Nor e'en's the cardinal's cap beyond my dreams!
Olgar's estate's immense—oh!—'twill not fail me
Once Olgar's gone and Athelwold supreme:—
The secret serves for all the future years—

*The grants to Sylvester I by Constantine the Great,—so bitterly inveighed against by Dante and other writers—were chiefly lands, not money, it is true; but it is hardly presuming too much on poetic license to use the terms interchangeably. These grants are supposed to have been the foundation of the material prosperity of the papacy.

Ah, Constantine, of how much ill was cause
Not thy conversion, but those rich domains
That the first wealthy pope received of thee!

—Dante, trans. by Milton. (?)

The thane becomes my bondsman once he's wedded,

Nor shall he cheaply buy enfranchisement!

The good Lord makes some tools for our advantage:

Blind rage, revenge, envy, hatred of kinsfolk,

But chief, uxorious age and am'rous youth—

Madness and dotage—where the wit's alien,

The understanding blank. O classic tablet!

Whose wax intrigue most loves to write its will in,

I have thee to my liking:—Athelwold,

Full of phlegm and innocence, all impulse

And sensibility!—that's my tablet's name.

He's done some cheating i' the game with girls,

But that's his farthest reach in villainy:

He is not bad—no!—youth's exuberant folly

Froths in his heart and bubbles at his lips,

But that's his sum of faults—to play the fool,

As he doth now.—I'm half ashamed of him!—

Faith, making him the chief tool o' my life-work

Honors the boy too much,—but great dogs mouse!

Ha, ha!—He must essay the villain's role

While all unconsciously the villain's dupe,

And madly bent upon his own designs,

He'll but encompass mine. Still, the game's desperate!

Cozening the King may work somebody's ruin:—

Hum—what of Offa?—Both wheels are in the mire,

And, quotha, this will stick as well as t'other!

Why, zounds, it may—still, Offa's role's unknown,

And priesthood cloaks worse deeds.—Once the plot fails.

The novice will tell all?—That's a safe presumption!

Ay, cowards drag destruction on themselves
And all their friends, when reck'ning's day arrives,

Blabbing dark plots to ears bent on their ruin,
While a consistent villain damns his soul,
And oft escapes while puzzled Justice falters.
Menace lies there!—But I'll not pother further:
There be twenty shifts will lie me out of it
Should the worst come to the worst—so there's an end on't.

Enter ATHELWOLD.

ATHELW.

Ha,—Offa.

OFFA.

And how is my dear young lord this evening?

ATHELW.

Why, Offa, well!—Plucked back from Heav'n's threshold,

And headlong plunged to hell—I'm very well!

[*Sinks on a stool.*

OFFA (*staring*)

How, what?—Thou art merry, my lord.

ATHELW.

Hah?

OFFA.

Thou'rt merry.

ATHELW.

Why, so I am, good Offa, so I am,—

I had forgot that—ha, ha, ha!
 Right merry, like the wretch in middle air
 Hung at a rope's end—when he dances, Offa!

OFFA (*clutching ATHELW.*)

Hah—it goes awry then?—no!

ATHELW.

Awry?—No, no! All's fair and straight now,
 Offa,
 Though much awry this morn.

OFFA (*aside*)

Curse his reserve! (*aloud*) And why such emphasis
 On "fair and straight now," son?

ATHELW.

Nay, art at fault for once, old subtlety?
 Thou'rt wont to read men's minds with some precision,—
 Pray do so now. *I go to Olgar (rising)*
 To put the redeeming touch to a bad business.

OFFA (*embracing him*)

O sweet, candid youth, why act'st so strangely?
 Come, put thy trust in me—come, tell me all.
 Say, what's amiss?—Offa will remedy it.
 Thou art not well,—oh, there's a wild abstraction
 In thy wide-opened eye:—thou art not well—
 Go sleep, my lord, go sleep,—do, good my lord!

ATHELW.

Oh, thy advice was damnable, most damnable!
 I'll heed thee nevermore.

[*Throws his cloak from him, and sinks on the stool again.*

OFFA (*aside*)

Now out it comes! (*aloud*) Alas, injurious youth!
Explain thyself:—wherein have I offended?
Affectionate and sedulous to serve thee,
Perchance I've erred—but say, where lies the
fault?

ATHELW.

Therein that thou hast brought my head in jeop-
ardy!

OFFA (*with exquisite irony*)

I?

ATHELW.

Thou hast, and eke thine own—when vengeance
strikes

Think'st to be guiltless?—He must hang with the
thief

Who counseled the theft, good Offa!

OFFA (*aside*)

He's mad who leagues himself with weak allies,
For good or ill—destruction yawns for him!

I now could moralize longer on't. (*aloud disdain-
fully*)

Get thee to th' apothecary,—take physic,
Do, my son:—may-apple and gamboge—

ATHELW.

Dost thou well to mock me, being undone?

OFFA.

Go to.—Wilt still jest with a grave face, strip-
pling?

ATHELW.

Oh!—know all, then: she lives—the marplot's
near—

Now scratch, diplomacy!

OFFA.

Rowena?

ATHELW.

Rowena.

OFFA.

Diabolus!—How know'st thou this?

Speak, cunctator!

ATHELW.

Nay, wak'st up?—We have the witch to thank
for't.

OFFA.

What, she's in that cave?—Accursed heathen!
So near?

ATHELW.

There she abides with my half-naked babe,—
Scarce a league hence.

OFFA.

Babe, babe?—Thou told'st me naught of babes.

ATHELW.

It blessed th' interim since I saw her last.

OFFA.

“Blessed?”

Oh, little, golden-haired blossom of lech’ry!—
‘Tis bad, oh, bad! Babes are potent appeals
For sympathy, once such matters come to light.

ATHELW.

And come to light this shall:—I'll make atone-
ment,

Be what the outcome may—adieu Elfrida!

OFFA.

So, chivalry?—'Umph!—thy letter's gone.

[Drums with indifference.]

ATHELW.

Furies!—not that—my fate's not sealed yet?

OFFA.

Nay, 'tis thy happiness is confirmed, son.

ATHELW.

Irremovable step!—What mad haste urged it?

OFFA.

Thy bidding, son—out on bad memories!

ATHELW.

O fatal lapse of thought!—How long?

OFFA.

Full six hours Alfred's gone. What!—thou knew'st it.

ATHELW.

True, true! What didst thou write?—A copy!

OFFA.

Here's one verbatim. (*pulls out a paper and reads*)

O admirable King, consummate in wisdom, prudence and foresight!—What unhappiness hath been diverted from Edgar's bed through sending me hither!—She's rich, but the less said about her beauty the less disparagement. Alas, that your Grace should be so deceived!—So dark, she's a very blackamoor, and would lie like a bucket of pitch, or a shadow at high noon, in the lily-white sheets of the royal bridal couch.

Scene VIII.

THE FAITHLESS FAVORITE.

*No!—let her wed some thane of low degree,
and compensate him with her wealth for her
ugliness, but never disgrace royalty.*

Thy Grace's sick but ever faithful

ATHELWOLD.

[OFFA reads this with unction.]

ATHELW.

That's penned e'en with the arch-fiend's bad facility:

Blacker lies ne'er villain writ on paper.

OFFA.

Well!—an thy babbling train keep still, what harm in't?

Her beauty now hath bloomed some seasons, yet The King hath never seen her, nor may ever.

What dost thou think?—Out with it! Nature breathes

I' the heat and angry motion of first thoughts:
Unwise redaction robs them of their glow,
And us of ardent impulse.

ATHELW.

Mine own lips must tell all:—honor and reason Alike impel to't.—O cruel ordeal!

OFFA.

Honor and reason?—ho, ho, ho!

ATHELW.

Why laugh'st?

OFFA.

Ho, ho, ho! Ha, ha, ha, ha!

ATHELW.

Thy laughter choke thee!

OFFA.

Ha, ha, ha!

Why thou squash, thou veg'tal thing sans heart,
sans liver,

How can I help but laugh thee out o' count'-
nance?

He's a traitor to good sense

Who, having understanding, doth not use it

Throughout each brief, irrevocable hour:—

What canst thou do?

Wilt thou shrink back now?—Dost thou tremble,
boy,

With the prize won arch-angels might contend
for,

Nor deem the price too great to forfeit Heav'n
For such a bride as thou wilt bed to-morrow?

Too late thy scruples, boy!—Humph!—hast had
signs

Or dreams, belike, to daunt thee?—A courageous
heart

Or bent on good or ill is its own oracle,
And asks not dream or portent to succeed.

Out on thee!—Fy!—Thy head is compromised,
And for that matter mine, with nothing gained
As yet:—hast more to risk, driving the business
To its full brunt?—A girl is in the way?

Then must she out of it—faith, that right speed-
ily!

But there thou err'dst, to marry such: ten thous-
and

Are every day enjoyed without the ceremony.

Let her come forward!—'tis with this we'll front
her—

She was thy plaything once but never wife;
 Let her prove priest and candle if she can!
 Else may we foist her on some other thane,
 Swearing the child's not thine:—and by the
 mass!

When questions rise about a birth, believe me,
 It takes a Solomon to resolve the matter,—
 Wives are broad furrows strange birds oft drop
 seeds in,
 And worthless hedges there, as wise men know!
 How canst thou tell the child's thine own, my
 lord?
 How any man whilst highways lead to traveling?

ATHELW.

Hah!

OFFA.

Oh, she's no foil to our designs, believe me,
 If thou dost not give way to womanishness!
 Resolute men stretch to the full endeavor,
 And oft surpass their hopes.—Avaunt, base fears!

ATHELW.

Deep-tutored thou in harsh and heartless meas-
 ures!
 But, ah! relax thy brows—her case is desp'rate,—
 E'en nature's leagued against the helpless one:
 She's ill and like to perish in the cave.

OFFA.

'Umph!—true, death's a serviceable fellow.
 That she may!

ATHELW.

Oh!—she must thence, and that without delay:
 The beldam will come here, fail I to send for her.

OFFA.

That strikes a timely thought—didst promise it?

ATHELW.

To the old hag, ay,—and meant it truly.

OFFA.

Oh, excellent!—I'll thither in thy stead,
And soon we'll have her buried—um—in a
nunn'ry.

Tush, tush!—The problem's solved: go, sleep in
peace,

And on the morrow wed Elfrida.

ATHELW.

Still sinks my heart with doubt and dark fore-
bodings:—

Come thou with me—we'll sift the matter fur-
ther.

[Going.]

OFFA (*nudging him playfully*)

"Still sinks thy heart with doubt and dark fore-
bodings?"

Perhaps, my lord — who knows? — nay, I *will*
say't!—

Thy manhood

Shrinks from the ordeal of the first embrace,
Like my soft damsel wedded in her teens,—
First waking to the sense of sex in tears
When lights go out and bridegroom courage rises.
Nil desperando!

I'll serve thee a decoction of repute

Will last the honey-moon—smil'st, doughty fel-
low?

I'll tell thee what it did to Lord Smallaxltree—

[*Exeunt, OFFA talking.*]

ACT III, SCENE IX.—A chapel in OLGAR'S castle.—*Candles burning and the altar dressed for a wedding.*

Enter OFFA and a PRIEST, examining a casket.
OFFA.

Whence had'st it?

PRIEST.

He dropped it without—the poor, mad nobleman
that created the disturbance.

OFFA.

Give it me,—I'll further examine it.

PRIEST.

And I'll go put on canonicals. [Exit PRIEST.

OFFA (*sniffing*)

Some putrid thing's within it—(*opening the casket*) hah!—a heart, (*taking it out*)
Full foul and rank—and by that token human.
O curious cone! Intricate mechanism!—
But soft!—I dream:—here's but an empty shell,
Scarce a man's fist in bigness, in my hand,
Its chambers, once quick-pulsing, void and still—
Presenting naught to puzzle understanding.
And art thou then the citadel of life,
Frail and destructible thing?—Creation's plan
Methinks deserved more pains!
A child can read the mystery of the heart,
Plucked from the bosom and anatomized:—
Holes, pipes and caverns—why, 'tis plain enough
The heart's—a pump.
Maker!—explain its workings in the living,—
Till thou dost so wise men must grope in ign-
rance.

A thing like this beat once in Caesar's bosom,
 A thing like this joyed o'er Poppaea's* lusts,
 A thing like this moved Antigone to pity,
 A think like this owned too old Jezebel—
 Ambition, lust, self-sacrifice and murder!
 Are ye all here, tenants of emptiness?
 O irreconcilable heart!
 Where's pride?—where's envy?—avarice?—civic
 hatreds?
 I peer in vain,—thou'rt mute and giv'st no sign
 That these things be, though well the ravaged
 earth
 Avouch them real.—Here's a black, ugly clot,
 And there—what glitters i' the gory mesh,
 Seen through the wide-rent apex? Zounds!—a
 ring. (*pulls it out*)
 Nay, most excellent madman!—
 Thou kept'st a nasty pocket-book for thy jewels,
 Yet 'twas not done amiss. Prate nevermore
 That nothing good comes from the human heart,
 That breeding-place of treasons, lusts and mur-
 ders!—
 Here's proof to the contrary. Mass!—I'll almost
 rate
 The human heart higher than a young pig's,
 Which peasants stuff or stew for dinner.—
 Humph!
 That puts the question, how can I tell what this
 is?
 Can it be human?

*Messalina might serve better here, but the line unfortunately admits only a name of three syllables;—this, perhaps, is as good a reason as any other when it comes to a choice between two women.

As far as entrails go, cut open a pig
And you will find a man, or wise men lie,
And vice-versa.

Marry, that's a rich morsel for moralizers!
Let Plato and Diogenes canvas it:—(*he feigns
two voices*)

How wondrous God hath made us!—

Likewise pigs.

With what precise, omniscient care and art!—

Likewise pigs.

How just the wise proportions!—

Likewise pigs'.

How delicate yet strong our vital organs!—

Likewise pigs'.

How true, how swift their functions and harmonious!—

Likewise pigs'.

How subtle all our instincts deep-engraven!—

Likewise pigs'.

How masterful our little lusts and appetites!—

Likewise pigs'.

How meekly we obey and lie down under them!—

Likewise pigs.

How admirably preserved the human species!—

Likewise pig's.

With what gusto men do their duty there!

Likewise—sessa.

And so on, (*in prop. pers.*) through all the great processes and phases of nature,—procreation, bearing, birth, being, dying, putrefying, and the last great change, the worm-eaten one, and transmutation into the original elements.— Wherein, throughout, we are in all respects a

close parallel to, and no better than swine. Nay, I defy any one to show proof in clear reason that our Maker lavishes, or ever lavished, more care on us than on the groveling species. La, why should he?—Pish!

[*Fings the heart in a corner and exit—with the ring and casket.*

Re-enter the PRIEST clad in full canonicals,—he takes his place on the altar. Choir-boys and other attendants enter and take theirs.—Suitable music, gradually swelling.

Enter OLGAR, the COUNTESS, ATHELWOLD, ELFREDA, pages and attendants. They proceed to the altar, and the PRIEST marries ATHELWOLD and ELFREDA with the usual ceremonies, somewhat curtailed.—Then, after benediction, exeunt omnes—OFFA re-appearing on the altar as they withdraw:—as he does so, with the choir-boys' chanting in the audience's ears, the curtain falls.

A C T I V.

ACT IV.

ACT IV, SCENE I.—Before OSBURGA'S cave.

Enter RODA and HAKO.

HAKO (*limping*)

Let me lean on thee, girl. Art sure it was the mad youth?

RODA.

Do eyes see? Oh!—the rogue, to rob me of that ring.

HAKO.

Poor, moonstruck noble! He left thee something in recompense?

RODA.

Silver (*producing it*). I held up my hands in terror at meeting him—straightway he, his eyes blazing like meteors, savagely seized me and tore the ring from my fingers. 'Twas in the lane two nights since—

Enter OSBURGA.

HAKO.

Ah, dame!—How fares my sister?

OSB.

She's gone, alack!

HAKO.

Gone! Why dost thou sigh?—Gone whither?

OSB.

Oh, that I could answer thee! With a monk sent by Lord Athelwold she went joyfully hence, despite my entreaties, some hours ago.

HAKO.

Lord Athelwold! Who is Lord Athelwold?

OSB.

Thy honorable brother-in-law, forsooth! Must I catalogue to thee thy relations?

HAKO.

The devil! Thou didst discover him then at the castle?

OSB.

While thou lay'st perdue. But where wast thou?
Thou look'st sickly, too.

HAKO.

Ask these wounds and let them answer thy reproaches.

OSB.

Well!—thou art forsworn:—thou didst not kill him.

HAKO (*sternly*)

Woman!—vengeance deferred strikes with redoubled force.

OSB.

Nay, renounce thy vow and be friends with thy new-found relation.—He takes thy sister home as his acknowledged wife, if the priest lied not. But they went a-foot—alack, she must be half dead ere this!

HAKO.

Why didst thou not accompany them to the castle?

OSB.

He would none of me, that priest! Still, I followed at a little distance:—they took the opposite way, and then, alarmed, I hurried back purposing to look for thee.

HAKO.

What wouldst thou have me do? Suspect'st more
deviltry?

How looks the monk?

OSB.

Black, low-browed, sunken-eyed, drooped-looking
and thought-worn--with a flaming cross scarred
in either cheek.

HAKO.

Peace to thy fears!—An hour will find him.
Were he as fleet as a deer he should be tracked
to cover:—my followers are whole though I'm
disabled. We will at least know whither they
take her.

[*Blows a whistle*:—several OUTLAWS instantly appear. As they enter the scene closes.

ACT IV, SCENE II.—A cell in a monastery.—
ROWENA asleep on the floor with her child in
her arms.

ROW. (*dreaming*)

Rogue, rogue, begone! See, it is morning,
Thelwy.

[*Murmuring this, she sits up and stares about her.*

Enter OFFA.

OFFA.

The foul fiend rules thy dreams too. Dost sin
even being asleep?

ROW.

Rude monk, where bides my lord? He'll teach
thee manners.

OFFA.

Marry, where thou canst never come—in Heaven.

ROW.

Why, thou blasphemous quibbler!—I mean my
husband. [He laughs.]

OFFA.

Him mean I, too—the fool that played the role.
Hark!—the bell— [A bell tolls.]

ROW.

Eternal tears!—it tolls for whom?—Not Thelwy!
O gracious Heaven!—Thelwy is not dead?

OFFA.

He died yester-night:—poignant remorse for his
misdeeds with thee killed him.

ROW.

My misdeeds,—mine? O cruel, cruel, cruel!

OFFA.

Thou art a stiff-necked, unrepentant sinner! He
died broken and contrite in spirit:—wilt thou
not down on thy knees and pray for mercy,
too?

ROW. (*kneeling*)

Almighty God, have mercy on me, a sinner! I
am a mortal and have need of prayers for
every hour I breathe:—in ignorance, blinded
with love, what have I done?

OFFA.

What thou'l burn for. Didst not take holy vows
and break them?

ROW.

The vows of the novice, ay—but for whom, for
what broken! [She weeps.

OFFA.

Arraign the dead fearlessly! Charge the whole
fault to him silenced forever:—can tombstones
answer lies?

ROW. (*clasping his knees*)

Monk!—monk! By thy God I adjure thee, tell
me he lives. Then what thou wilt with me.

OFFA.

Ay, if Pharaoh's host lives! Art pale?—Here's
drink to revive thee.

[*Offers a cup of wormwood.*

ROW.

Thy draught's wormwood,—give me more of it!
Oh, there's no bitterness now left in life for
me! Prithee, where's his body? I'll go to him
dead that cast me off living.

OFFA.

That thou shalt not.

ROW.

Not take the farewell look?

OFFA.

Pooh!

ROW.

In his own castle not view Thelwy's corpse?

OFFA.

Thy reason totters:—deem'st this place his cas-
tle?

ROW.

True, it hath a more familiar look. Whither
hast lured me? Is't not a nunnery?

OFFA.

Ay,—thou art come hither for penance. The good Abbess hath given thee o'er to me for punishment.

ROW.

Thou hast dealt treacherously by me,—oh, most treacherously! But, nunnery or castle, I'll view Thelwy's corse. See, I am calm.

OFFA.

Tut, his body's not here:—the bell tolled but a requiem for the dead.

ROW. (*frenzied*)

Juggling monk, thou liest! Away!—Unbar the door—away, away! Wouldst drive me mad?

OFFA (*shrugging his shoulders*)

That as it may be,—thou art to suffer somewhat for thy apostacy. Fool!—know'st thou not vengeance hath seized thee? Thou wilt nevermore see the light of day:—thy name is rased from the records of men. Swallowed up in oblivion thou, living, shalt be lost like a black plume dropped in the swift-flowing river at midnight. None shall learn thy fate, none pierce the living tomb wherein thou rott'st immured—none view thy form when dead. This comfort only hast thou:—thy days will not be many. Worn out with endless penances thou hastenest to thy end. But while thou liv'st thy whole commune shall be with remorse and bitterness. Thus may the holy orders ever punish their renegades! Amen!

Now for harsh medicine:—thy obstructing body must suffer first, and, like a dog's malignity, sinful desires be driven out with blows.

[*He claps his hands.*

Enter THREE MONKS with scourges.

FIRST MONK (*droning*)

To aid in the salvation of the back-slider, the pious Abbess sends us.

ROW.

Father in Heaven, grant me speedy death!

OFFA (*aside*)

Amen! (*aloud*) Let the scorpions bite her!

[*ROWENA is stripped to the waist and bound to a pillar. Each MONK lashes her in turn, piously and slowly repeating a verse from Holy Scripture as he does so. ROWENA soon swoons.*

OFFA.

Enough for the nonce,—undo her bonds. Let her lie here without food or water twenty-four hours:—then shall we make more of her.

FIRST MONK.

Wilt thou leave her this devil's spawn, Abbot?

OFFA.

[*Indicating the child.*

Till morning break,—then to some orphanage for bastards with it. Depart.

[*Exeunt OFFA and MONKS.*

ACT IV, SCENE III.—The same.

Enter an OLD MONK.

MONK.

I will e'en baptize the infant as the Abbess bids, ay—and save the mother. Thirty years, thirty

years dead, yet in this unfortunate she lives again, my long lost Rebecca. Oh, she shall not perish! Diabolical Offa, thou hast other designs here than churchly ones, I'll warrant. Daughter, dost hear? Drink of this, and with God's help thou shalt be far hence ere morning-light. Though the task be difficult yet will I consummate it.

[As he kneels, pouring the liquor down ROWENA'S throat, the scene ends.]

ACT IV, SCENE IV.—Before OLGAR'S castle.—*A hunting-party forming,—nobles, foresters, steeds, dogs in leash, etc.—A random note from a horn heard at intervals, intermingling with the intermittent yelping of the hounds and neighing of horses.*—Enter OLGAR: *he speaks to divers nobles, gives some commands to ATTENDANTS and re-enters the castle.*—Now appears ATHELWOLD, magnificently attired:—*after customary salutations and casual inquiries, handling a spear here, a bow there, he too departs as he entered.* As he makes his exit enter ROWENA disguised as a boy, with her child concealed in a black cloth:—*it is very early, and her point of entry is a little remote from the cortege of nobles, and behind a clump of shrubbery.*

ROW.

Day springs reluctant from the envious east,
And here, methinks, I'll rest and con my beads.

(she reclines and prays briefly)

Not long unwimpling morn her welcome face

Hath shown, yet sweet-attuned the can'rous hum
Rises from bird and insect choristers,—
Or couched in leafy limb or mossy bower,—
Nor lags the herald cock that earlier crows,
Nor creeping thing by brook and marshy pond;—
While honeysuckles and their kind now ope
Their greedy mouths to catch the pearly dew.
All nature wakes refreshed, but not so I:—
Slow-paced, like night's long hours when mourners weep,

I've wandered, faint and sore, through wood and lane

To come—I know not whither!—Yon's a pile
(half rising)

Stately and wide, of hosp'table aspect,
And gathering in the court I now discern
A knightly train, each moment waxing larger.
Alack, this costume!

Ere the day brightens I'll make bold t' accost them:

They may direct my steps to what I seek,—
Which found, I'll back and groan o'er penances
In the old nunn'ry where my woes began—
Asking but this—from life a swift deliv'rance.

(she rises)

In such a place as this my Thelwy dwelt,—
Near such a place perchance I'll find his grave.—
Ah me!

The fatal weakness creeps o'er me again.

[She sinks down—the child cries, hounds bay,
several young nobles come scurrying towards her.

FIRST NOBLE.

Ha-ha! What dost thou here, boy? Up, up, up!
[Pulling ROW.

SEC. NOBLE.

Out with him, prowler! Pull him out, night-hawk!

FIRST NOBLE.

Come, mannikin, forward, forward! What's thy business here?

THIRD NOBLE.

A prize! A prize!

[Runs his spear through the bundle enwrapping the infant, and dances about with it dangling aloft. ROWENA shrieks and implores him to lower it, but he pays no heed to her—the nobles shouting and cheering their fellow. Enter OLGAR at a distance.

ROW. (frantic at length)

Pestilent varlet, brav'st a mother's fury?

Now, by Niobe's tears!—since deaf to prayers,
Down, dog, to gaping hell!

[Wrenches a spear from one of the nobles—now augmented—and runs the offender through:—he falls with the child on top of him. As the latter rolls off on the ground a great Dane leaps out, and catching the bundle in his teeth, circles round and round the enclosure.—ROWENA is seized by the excited nobles as she starts madly after the dog.—OLGAR shouts and beckons commandingly, and she is dragged before him with little ceremony—the dog meanwhile still

running about, with young nobles pursuing him.

Enter ATHELWOLD and ELFRIDA, from a side door.

ELF.

Alas, sweet lord, I'm loth to see thee go!
Oh, be not vent'rous, love!—Nay, do not smile,—
I had a dream last night weighs down my spirits—

Ah me!—it was a most distressing vision:—
Methought a bleeding heart was held in view,
Plucked from a bosom that I deemed my lover's,—
A pale corse lay near by it, cold and rigid—
But as I stooped to scan the features better
I woke,—to find my bridegroom bending o'er me.
Doubtless I moaned out in mine anguished slumber?

ATHELW.

Thou didst indeed, my love!—Was that the reason?

Oh!—rest thy fears:—mischievous fancy
Doth conjure up a thousand horrent forms
To daunt the tender, doting heart of woman,
When she's in love.—Hark!—what mad commotion!

See how they press and throng about thy sire!

ELF.

Nay, where youth gathers what import hath clamor?

[*They move forward:—as they do so, the great Dane, after a final turn or two, rushes di-*

rectly towards them and lays the child unharmed at ATHELWOLD'S feet.

ATHELW. (*patting him*)

Good Stigo, brave Stigo! What hast thou brought me, Stigo?

ELF.

Zounds, my lord, look!—This is some scurvy knave's impertinent pleasantry.

[ATHELWOLD takes up the child:—approach OLGAR, etc., with ROWENA held captive. Seeing the child, she struggles but is held fast:—ATHELWOLD'S back turned towards her.

OLGAR.

Here's a sad adventure!

Dost know what thou hast done, boy?

ROW. (*calmly*)

Have I done murder?

OLGAR.

Nay, boy, not that:—sore wounded, he yet lives.

ROW.

"Boy, boy?"—Why dost thou call me boy?—

Oh me! [Shrinks back, recollecting.]

OLGAR.

He weeps,—alas, he is but young!

I pity him.

A NOBLE.

"Him, him," my lord?—Look!—the torn vestment— [ROWENA would pull it together.]

OLGAR.

Hah, by my old eyes!—What sex art thou?—
'Umph,

A duller pair might mark thy hips and bosom.

ROW.

That sex indeed that loves its young and dies
for't.

Oh, take me hence—to prison—anywhere!

OLGAR.

'Lack, if the child's thine own and thou woman,
The brutal thane hath well deserved his fate.
Oh! Woman's love, in all the deep heart bonds,
Typifies that of the great God who made us,
In pure unselfishness and immortal vigor.

Enter OFFA behind.

ROW.

Oh, God in Heaven!—what do I see?

Thelwy, Thelwy, Thelwy!

Art thou alive?—Thank God, thank God, thank
God! [Struggling desperately.]

OLGAR.

Ha, ha, ha!—a merry situation. Lord Athelwold,
thou hast her child, and she must play quits by
claiming thee for it. It hath chanced before.

ELF.

Put down the brat, my lord!

[ATHELWOLD does so and turns away.]

OFFA (*pushing to the front briskly*)

What's the stir about? Ah! Meg, the mad nun,
as I live. What dost thou here, Meg?

[To ROWENA.]

ROW.

Thou black devil in a monk's cowl, away!

Detestable wretch, didst not say he died?

OFFA.

Mum, mum, girl,—come, go with me.

[*Very soothingly.*

ROW.

O Thelwy!—see, they hold me:—but why dost thou stand beside the fair lady, and not fly to my arms? [*Stretches them out helplessly.*

OFFA.

Most melancholy spectacle,—O, most melancholy spectacle! 'Las, this is her wonted humor:—asking every nobleman she meets to come to her arms! Oh, that none had e'er obeyed the summons! Poor mad girl, thou hadst then not been in this state.

ROW. (*wildly*)

Thelwy, my dear husband, what is the mystery?

O Thelwy, canst thou deny me?

ELF.

Scandalous creature!—Whom dost thou call husband?

ROW.

Him whom thou claspest by the hand, lady.

ELF.

Why, he is mine!

ROW.

Nay, he is mine.

ELF.

I tell thee I was wedded to him yester-night.

ROW:

I yester-night a year ago. Oh, my presaging fears!

[*Weeps.*

ELF.

Outrageous!—What say'st to that, Lord "Thelwy"? Thane, art thou tongue-tied? [To ATH.]

OFFA.

O sweet Lady Elfrida,—O my good Lord Olgar, heed her not! Must I out with the whole melancholy history?—A nun once, pure, devout—oh, what tears have I shed over her!—she was betrayed by one it behooves me not to name:—ye behold the fruit. Madness seized on her after the child's birth, and 'tis her peculiar delusion to claim every new-made bridegroom as her husband. Disguised as she now is ye may find her wandering from castle to castle,—as the moon fulls, my lord, as the moon fulls. (*turns to ROW.*) Come with me, Meg,—come, come, dear! Uncle Offa will take thee back to the old nunnery. Poor mad girl, come.

[*Coaxingly.*

Enter REDWALD behind.

ROW.

Christ, since thou sufferedst was ever mortal denied and mocked like this?—Thelwy, Thelwy, come to me! See, the babe coos at thy knees —thy babe and mine. Wilt thou not have pity on it, owning thyself its father? Oh, speak, speak, speak!

ELF.

I echo that wild cry! What hast to say?

[*Turning imperiously to ATHELW.*

ATHELW. (*clutching his throat*)

Hah?

ELF.

What hast thou to say?

ATHELW.

O God!

ELF.

But what hast thou to say?

ATHELW.

I know her not.

[Turns away.]

ROW. (*more wildly*)

O speak! O speak! O speak!

On thy words hang life and death—O life!

RED. (*thrusting forward and leering in her face*)

Pooh, pooh, pooh, pooh!

Zoroaster laughed when he was born.*

ROW.

Oh, 'tis too much! Accumulating troubles,

Break, break, break, my heart!

[*She collapses.—OFFA takes OLGAR aside and talks earnestly to him, pointing oft to RED-WALD.*]

RED.

Pooh, pooh, pooh, pooh!

Death's the sole universal heirloom:—

Earth's a wide death-bed; yea, its very crust

The ashes of the holocaust of ages—

Millions, millions, millions, millions—

Soot and ashes, soot and ashes, soot and ashes—

'Tis a shrewd guess we serve that end by living.

Lo!—a babe,—the babe is born—ah!—see,

Pretty, pretty thing, it wails, it cries,—

*This tradition of Zoroaster (or Zardusht) is mentioned by Pliny, among other authors.

No wonder!

The sentence of death's been passed upon it.

On it?—On you, on you, on you—on all!

All, all condemned who breathe!—We're male-factors,

With death-watch set,—ha, ha!—and each one wond'ring—

At least the few that think!—

Who next will be led forth, like in a plague.

What, whimp'ring mortal, recks it, then, (*taking up the child*)

If thou die early or die late?

To-day's as soft a couch as to-morrow.

Oh, come the noble death! [*Kisses and fondles it.*

OFFA (*nudging OLGAR*)

See, see, see!

OLGAR.

Ay, the paternity's out,—both punished with madness, too. Retributive justice, what a fate!

—Didst note his wise declamation? This is more like stage lunacy:—he begins to talk much and out of place.

OFFA.

Yea, and indeed shames us with his superior wisdom—the trick of the feigned character, not the true madman. Catch your lunatic in solitude if you would spy sure marks of his malady:—this at least in the beginning, when it falls suddenly on undecayed faculties. In company, ever conscious of observation, he is discreet, watchful and taciturn. Mark the girl—she does better.

OLGAR.

But this is mal-apropos, too. Carry them both within, and we will see what disposition may be made of the matter.

OFFA.

No other disposition, surely, my lord, than a mad-house for both of them!

OLGAR.

But art sure the girl's demented?

OFFA (*with conviction*)

Oh, she *is* mad, stark mad!—Let no man doubt it:—

I've had her case passed on by some psychiaters, That are themselves half mad, and know the signs.

OLGAR.

Th' elect of the profession, eh, Offa?—Well, Away with them!

[ROWENA and child are borne off, and RED-WALD seized and forced after them.

OFFA.

Where's my Lord Athelwold? [*He comes forward.*

ELF.

That's not the riddle! Where's Elfrida?

OLGAR.

What ask'st thou? Why stand'st thou with thy brows knit so unkindly, child?

ELF.

Quoth he "O God!"

OFFA.

Now, dost wonder at that, lady? I'll enlight thee:

A sudden, poignant pain
 Seized on his reins,—sharper than Dunstan's
 pincers,*
 That tweaked the devil's nose and made him
 howl—
 That pain would make thee moan "O God" too,
 lady.
 O these banquets and wine! These banquets
 and wine! (*turns to ATHELWOLD*)
 Did I not warn thee? Drink asparagus' juice—
Cyathus vinarius ter in die post cib.—
 As I prescribed for thee some time ago,—
 Else groan thy days out with thy malady.

ELF. (*looking fixedly at ATHELW.*)

Quoth he "O God!"

OLGAR.

No more of that! Hath not the excellent Offa
 explicated all? Prithee, in—we will know
 more presently.—Let the hounds be put to kennel:—we'll hunt another day, my lords. O
 human miseries—alas! [Exeunt omnes.

*Dunstan—Abbot of Glastonbury, Archbishop of Canterbury, Saint Dunstan. The exploits, tricks and superstitions connected with this subtle prelate's name form a very edifying chapter in early English history. The encounter with the devil here adverted to presumably occurred in Dunstan's private stithy—the abbot diverting himself occasionally at the forge—where, after repeated visits, the malicious fiend was one day taken unawares, Dunstan catching his proboscis in a pair of red-hot pincers, and making him swear to never molest him again. The tradition runs, if I mistake not, that the father of lies kept his word.

ACT IV, SCENE V.—A mad-house at midnight.—

Out of impenetrable darkness comes a woman's voice:—ROWENA awaking, imagines herself in Hell.

ROW.

God!—God!—God!—God!—Who else is nigh?
 'Tis dark, 'tis dark, 'tis dark—what place is this?

(*maniacs shriek*)

What place, my soul?—Convulsion, chaos and night!

Oh, mercy, Christ!—Oh, mercy, mercy, mercy!
 O prayers, your offices!—Hark, they wail again,—
 (more tumult)

The tenants of perdition welcome me.

Hah,—door of torment, open! — Judged and damned,

My prescient soul, I know I'm lost in Hell;—
 Roused from the mortal change which men call death,

With the cold dew congealed upon my brow,
 Long slumbering, chill and numb I wake—in Hell.

Ah, Christ!

One sin hath dragged me down,—the sin of loving:—

God! Thou mad'st woman's heart—canst Thou condemn us?

By thy fore-doom we love what Thou left'st faithless—

Fore-doomed for man, what means that but fore-damned?

Thou mad'st all things,—didst Thou make torment too

Our portion in two worlds?—Am I damned already?

Despair gives strength:—fore-damned, I'd face my Maker

Rebellious like the first fell brood of Hell.

Oh, there again! (*renewed commotion—a child whines*) Hark!—ears, what's human here?
(*silence*)

Naught comforts from the universal gloom,—
The universe now night and my black soul. (*the child cries*)

Hah!—is't an illusion?—Where art?—thou cry'st still—

O precious, precious, priceless consolation! (*sobs*)
My babe—O blessed sound!—mine innocent's voice—

Oh, here, here, here! I have thee in my arms:—
Nay, if thou'rt here thy mother's not in Hell,—
'Tis all a dream, a phantasm wrought by terror;
But oh, how real—how horribly, horribly real!
All save the fiery couch and visible fiends,—
Ah! conscience needs them not to make a hell.
Mad phantasm, hence.—Alas!—where am I?
My hands and limbs are free,—'tis not a gaol;
I grope, and feel that cold stones wall me in:—
Let me collect my thoughts—a potion given me
As I lay faint,—no more can I remember.
But ah! it dawns on me—they called me mad:
Oh! I was not far wrong,—it is a hell—
I'm in a mad-house.

[*Sounds of sobbing mingle with the child's pulsing.—Scene ends.*

ACT IV, SCENE VI.—The same.—Moonlight illuminates the cell now:—ROWENA *in a corner huddled up.*

A VOICE FROM THE WINDOW.

Come to the casement, love; come to the casement, love—

Come to the casement:—the fools left it unbarred.

ROW.

Who art thou?

THE VOICE.

Come to the casement, love; come to the casement, love—

Come to the casement.—Nay, fear not.

ROW.

Again, who art thou?

THE VOICE.

Redwald, Redwald, Redwald.

Enter REDWALD from the window.

ROW.

Unhappy man, what dost thou here?

RED.

What all do,—weep, weep, weep!

Oh, I heard thee,—howl, howl, howl, ye demons!
(noises)

Locked up with madmen, I!—O outrage!—

But an old vine hugs th' inhospitable walls,—

Here's rope of twisted tendrils:—

Thou art my sweetheart now,—come, fly with me.

ROW.

I will, I will, I will!—O bless'd deliverance!

[*Exeunt through the window.*

Scene VIII.

THE FAITHLESS FAVORITE.

ACT IV, SCENE VII.—The same.

Enter TWO KEEPERS with lanterns.

FIRST KEEP.

Take the brat from her; drag it from her arms,
I say.

'Twas Offa's peremptory order.

SEC. KEEP.

'Lack, where is she?—The cell's empty!

FIRST KEEP.

Empty, fool!—Lend me thy lantern.

SEC. KEEP.

Oh, she's gone!—See, the casement's drawn. I
warned thee too, Gyves:—these old cells—

FIRST KEEP.

Rouse the head keeper, sirrah, instantly! 'Tis a
long leap to the ground,—we may find her
bones below. Oh, a pretty mess, truly!

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT IV, SCENE VIII.—The woods adjoining.

Enter REDWALD and ROWENA.

RED.

I cut out his heart with this dagger! (*showing
one*)

Wilt thou be my love forever?

ROW.

O pity, pity!—Thou wouldest not murder me?

RED.

I'll fetch thee a hatful of dewberries and a gourd
of spring-water an thou'l say yes. Then we'll

to the castle or cave, as thou listest, and drink mandragora.—No more o' the other one,—false, false, false!

[He sings.

She is too fair to look at me—

Beat away, heart!

She is too fair to look at me,—

Or say, is't art?

She is too fair to look at me,

She is too young to learn of me,

She is too wise to feel for me,—

Ah! beat away, heart.

ROW.

Yes, then; oh, yes!

RED.

"Losel, losel"—I hear the woods groan,—

When seven lie dead

For one maid wed,

Who wears the ring will claim his own.

'Twas graven on that she gave me. O the prophets!—the prophets!—the false preachers and prophets!

[Exit.

ROW.

Life, O fountain of wretchedness, how thou intoxicatest all that come to drink of thy waters! Miseries on miseries may overwhelm us, poverty famish, death confound,—yet, infatuate, the heart-sick mortal weeps on through countless calamities, resigned or pusillanimous. Alas!—wherefore? O effluence of inscrutable deity, life!—what art thou, why art thou? The wise of all ages have asked this—asked all in vain.—Many, indeed, in dark dreams have

grasped the bright nymph in the fountain:—but the elusive shape escapes the inprehensible fingers of matter, and the discovery on waking is only that of intellect's finity. But thou mother with the babe at thy breast!—ask not sacrilegiously why thou yet livest. (*caressing it*) Seduced, forsaken, conspired against unto deadly peril, I wander aimlessly through a dense wood, companioned by a madman:—forsaken, it may be, but not by God! He hath tempered the madman's frenzy,—my hero and protector, who useth me with noble, gallant gentleness. Yes! madmen, wild beasts, vipers, asps and scorpions are far less noxious than designing villains whose plans we may obstruct.—Oh, Heavens!

Enter OFFA and KEEPERS with cudgels.

OFFA.

Here she is and all's well. But look out for t'other one:—he hath a dagger ta'en from the young goatherd we met i' the way.

FIRST KEEP.

Fear not, Lord Abbot.

ROW. (*wringing her hands*)

Now am I utterly undone and lost. Vile man!—wilt thou not slay me at once and be done with it?

OFFA.

Prithee lad, secure her mouth:—shall we be wounded with a two-edged sword? Oh, the tongue's a formidable thing in woman!

[ROWENA is gagged and secured.

Re-enter REDWALD with berries and flowers.
RED.

Ask unbidden guests?—Ha!—Murderers! Ravishers!

[*Whips out his dagger and stabs the nearest KEEPER,—the other dodges and knocks him senseless with his cudgel.*

FIRST KEEP.

I bleed, father Abbot, I bleed!—Oh, oh! [Dies.
OFFA.

Fool! did I not warn thee?—Take thy medicine,
—get hence.

SEC. KEEP.

The nobleman's dead too,—that's quits.

OFFA.

Tush, no,—thy blow cracked not his cranium:—
seest blood ooze from his ears? He's but
senseless.

SEC. KEEP.

Some one comes.

OFFA.

Drag the body i' the bushes. As for thee, (*threatening ROW.*)—oh, if thou so much as sighest!
[*They drag the body and ROW. to concealment.*
Enter THREE ROMANIES.

FIRST ROM. (*sings*)

*Pitch thy camp in the woods,
Steal other men's goods,
And bask in the sun where it shines, oh!
An idle life's merry,
An honest contrary,—
But seldom the Romany pines, oh!*

SEC. ROM.

Rest we awhile. The game's all corralled at the rendezvous?

THIRD ROM.

All.

FIRST ROM.

Are the orders all supplied? Read me the chief consignments.

THIRD ROM. (*pulls out a paper and reads*)

Mem.—Three virgins for Mustapha Said at Venice—blue-eyed.

Mem.—Ten do. for S—— P——'s—straight-legged—to wash dishes.

Mem.—A blonde for the old C——l Luigo—not red-headed.

Mem.—Two boys for the A—— of Syracuse—must not have s—— —th.

Unintelligible scribble!—Read it thyself. (*tossing paper to t'other one*)

FIRST ROM.

'Twill do! Wouldst show thy secrets to a finical age?—We sail Tuesday week.

Enter OFFA pulling in ROWENA.

OFFA.

Rinaldo, well met. What!—jump up and draw your poniards on a friend? Fy, fy!—sit ye down. What, sirs! I have business with ye.

FIRST ROM.

Ha, ha, ha!—Well met, monk. Rogues, sit as he bids ye,—be friends with my old crony, Offa.

OFFA (*to FIRST ROM.*)

Rinaldo, a word in private. [*They walk apart.*

SEC. ROM.

My service to thee, fair leman. [Kisses ROW.

THIRD ROM.

Mine too, pudicity.

[Ditto.]

SEC. ROM. (*unmuffling* ROW.)

Didst ever see such a honeyfied mouth?

[Kisses her again.]

THIRD ROM.

Or such a waist?

[Embraces ROWENA.]

ROW.

O shameless dogs!

[Struggles bootlessly.]

FIRST ROM. (*coming forward*)

Three or nothing.

OFFA (*following*)

Make it the half pound and take the child.

FIRST ROM.

Three or nothing!

[Jingling money.]

OFFA.

Thou art an avaricious hound!—But wilt sell
her in Crete if I yield?

FIRST ROM.

Ay, or to a Genoese camp-follower.

OFFA.

Come then, we'll not haggle over the difference.

But thou durst not cast dice for it, I'll be
bound, Rinaldo.

FIRST ROM.

Agreed!

[Pulls out dice;—they seat themselves apart
and throw.]

Scene VIII.

THE FAITHLESS FAVORITE.

SEC. ROM. (*opening ROWENA'S vest—she is still bound*)

Beautiful, beautiful! Does the cow give sweet milk, I wonder?

THIRD ROM.

Leave thy foolery:—see, our betters are busy.

Come, girl, go with me. [*Pulling ROWENA.*

SEC. ROM.

The fellow's sublime!—Lucretia, come with me.

[*Pulling her another way.*

OFFA (*contentiously*)

Seven!

FIRST ROM.

No.

OFFA.

Yes.

FIRST ROM.

No, I say!

OFFA.

Well, cast again, then. [*Silence in that quarter.*

SEC. ROM. (*quarreling*)

Wilt not wait, hah?—Away!

ROW.

O God!—this too?

THIRD ROM.

Wait?—Not I, by Bacchus!

[*They struggle—ROWENA falls:—the twang of a bow is heard and an arrow transfixes the ROMANY last clutching ROWENA,—again, and the same thing happens to the other one.*

Enter HAKO and OUTLAWS.

HAKO.

At last!

[Releases and embraces ROWENA.—OFFA and the FIRST ROMANY have been secured, and the SEC. KEEPER also brought in a captive.

ROW.

O my brother!—thou wilt not shed more blood?

HAKO (*sternly*)

Peace, as thou lovest me.

ROW.

Alack!—one lies bleeding in the thicket to whom I owe much. Oh, save Redwald, unhappy youth!

[She runs to the thicket—REDWALD is brought in.

HAKO.

He lives.

ROW.

Thank God! At the risk of his life he befriended me.

SEC. KEEP.

Captain Outlaw, look you, I ask naught for myself, but ye dragged me from the body of my friend:—rain or shine, in luck and out, yon carl and I have been comrades twenty years. Let me but put him in earth decently, and if thou wilt have it so take my life as fee for't and welcome. Comrades true, comrades ever.

HAKO.

For that speech thou hast thy liberty, true-heart,—
Get thee gone with him. Come hither, my sister.

[Exit SEC. KEEPER.—HAKO converses apart with ROW.

OFFA.

Now will she tell all, good, bad and indiff'rent:—
Ay, like her incont'nen't bladder, a woman's heart
Must needs discharge its contents at short inter-
vals!

Well!—by naught elated and by naught cast
down,

A great soul holds aloof from circumstance.

(HAKO advances)

Robber!—what wouldest thou do with me?

HAKO (*calmly*)

Why, I mean to send thee back to Olgar's castle,
But in an altered shape, I'll promise thee.

(with fierce energy)

A vow, a vow!—Thou mad'st a vow, my soul!

[Exeunt OUTLAWS with their captives, ROW-
ENA and REDWALD, leaving the bodies.



ACT V.

ACT V.

ACT V, SCENE I.—A corridor in OLGAR'S castle.

Enter ATHELWOLD and ALFRED meeting.

ATHELW.

Thou here!

ALF.

Joy, Athelwold.

[Embraces him.]

ATHELW.

Didst see the King?—Thou art soon returned.

ALF.

No sooner than thou'l be chidden roundly:—
He comes hither.

ATHELW.

Comes!

ALF.

Dost start?—Ay, thou'rt caught in knavish
tricks!

ATHELW.

The King COMES?

ALF.

Humph!—The gay cavalier must wed in secret,
Lest old friends sit at the wedding-feast with
him,—

Or didst thou fear my rivalship, belike,
That I must pack away on a fool's errand?
Pish!—why dost thou clutch my arm so?

ATHELW.

On thy soul's honor, no!—the King comes not?

ALF.

Yea.

ATHELW.

Nay!

ALF.

But YEA!

Couched in a casual word, I learned his purpose,
Then stole away without his privity:—
Methought to be beforehand with the badinage.

ATHELW.

Man, I'm undone! Where didst thou meet him?

—True,

Kings sometimes steal away, and in disguise
Explore their realms,—though 'tis not Edgar's
wont.

ALF.

There thou hast him:—on his way hitherward
Disguised I met him,—scarce distant now ten
leagues.

ATHELW.

Oh, oh, oh!

ALF.

He liked not thy message neither, I'll warrant
thee:—

He drew down his kingly brows and stamped his
foot

Whenas he read.—It touched the priest's affairs?

ATHELW.

Hah—Offa—true—Offa!

[Exit.]

ALF.

Humph, humph!—He's in a singular humor:—
I'll after him,
And rally his bridegroom spleen into a frenzy.

[Exit.]

ACT V, SCENE II.—The bridal bower.—ELFRIDA
in the act of retiring, partly disrobed,—ELFWINE attending.

ELF.

Get thee gone, Elfwine,—my lord comes.

[Exit ELFW.

Enter ATHELWOLD hurriedly.

ATHELW.

Where's Offa?

ELF.

My love?

ATHELW.

Where's Offa?—OFFA!

ELF.

Why, at his beads, belike—or should be, marry!
What's that to thee?—Why ask'st thou after
him?

At this hour o' night, will not Elfrid do?

[Coming to him.

ATHELW.

At his beads!

[Exit.—ELFRIDA follows to the door but
turns back impatiently.

ELF.

Oh, an unquiet conscience mars his peace
Who thus abruptly starts and breaks off discourse,
Ere well he hath begun!—He acts most strangely:
His compliments have soured to gloomy looks,
His gallantry's mildewed to melancholy,

His sighs are sorrow's own and not love's feigning,

And oft he moans in's sleep.—He is not guiltless
Who, so transformed, frowns out his honeymoon,
Changed in the hour of fervor and delight
As by an evil spell, to my affront.

O jealousy!—build not too rash conjectures,
E'en where thou hast good grounds:—he is not
guiltless—

Nay, but I'll probe proof well ere I condemn
him,—

I'll brook his bare, perfunct denials no longer.

Re-enter ATHELWOLD.

ATHELW.

Where's Offa?—Dost thou not know?—WHERE'S
Offa!

I've ranged through room and corridor since
sundown,

And none can tell:—the dull fools stare agape,
Or shake their asinine heads.—O Offa, Offa!

(*flinging himself down*)

Were this place red Hell,

Where thou art better known, I might be an-
swered:—

Being more concerned, the devil keeps better
track

Than we do of priests' movements. (*thunder—*
he jumps up) Hark! Heav'n peals—(*he goes
to the casement and throws it open*)

Phew,—how it rains!—I should be gone ere this:
—(*turning away*)

There lies an ancient abbey close vicine,

And he may be there now.—Good night, good night! (*going*)

Perhaps the last!—but still, my sweet, good night;—

I must, I will see Offa,—dastardly priest!
Forsake me i' the pinch? [At the door.]

ELF. (*embracing him*)

Thou shalt not stir foot forth this evil night,—
Elfrida wills it.

ATHELW.

Thou'rt Queen Absolute to my thoughts and actions,
And regent o' my dreams,
Yet must not balk me now.—Oh! dost thou love
me? [Seizes her in his arms.]

ELF.

O my bosom!—
To the last heart-throb, my sweet, gloomy thane.

ATHELW.

Oh, there's hope in that!—Can men believe ye?

ELF. (*sweetly*)

Come, put it to the proof—now down, suspicion!
What was that girl to thee?

ATHELW. (*stares at her stupidly, then turns away*)

Gods!—What a dismal night!

[To the window again, still open.]

ELF. (*shutting it*)

Nay, let the tempest roar!—Tumults that rage
within

More wreck our peace. Prithee, begin confessing!

Thou ow'st me this,—a full and free recital:
No less shall win forgiveness.

[Leading him to a couch.]

ATHELW. (*not looking at her*)

And must I tell thee all?

ELF.

All, all!—I'll love thee the better for it,—
Thou hast evaded it too long already.
Art not a man?—That word implies some faults,
Some capers of excess the world terms gallan-
ties,
Which wives must needs o'er-look, else be be-
reaved.
Come now, the tale!—Unmoved I'll listen to thee.

ATHELW.

What woman hears unmoved a tale of perfidy?

ELF.

Who loves but pities where the world execrates.

ATHELW. (*in tears*)

Steeped to the eyelids in sweet womanliness
Art thou, my bride!—I'll break thy gentle heart.

ELF.

Tell me!—thou canst see the priest anon.

ATHELW. (*rising abruptly*)

Why, I have naught to tell!—Live and be happy.
[Exit.]

ELF. (*stamping*)

Now, 'tis too much!—He scorns and mocks my
tenderness,—
Oh, I could choke with rage and self-disdain!
I've cast myself away upon a villain,
A dark, impenetrable, secretive villain,

Self-locked, self-absolute,—
 The kind our sex most loathes—to smiles and
 tears
 Alike invulnerable—

Re-enter ATHELWOLD with a sword.

ATHELW.

I am ready to die:—do thou take this blade,
 And promise me when thou begin'st to hate—
 Upon the spur of that same fatal moment—
 Thou'l thrust me through,—and then I'll tell
 thee all.

ELF. (*laughingly*)

Thou wilt live long, that I'll promise thee.
 Was she fair in thine eyes, Athelwold?

ATHELWOLD. (*absently*)

As beautiful as ever dream or vision
 Portrayed to rapture. [Sighs.]

ELF.

Oh, was she indeed, my lord!—Heigh-ho,—pish!
 The night lengthens—wilt thou soon have fin-
 ished?

ATHELW.

Thou ask'dst to see the house of my dead past,
 And wilt thou turn back at the vestibule?

ELF.

Humph!—I deemed her ugly in her boy's ap-
 parel:—

How did she look in her own guise, prithee?

ATHELW.

Why,—I have forgotten—look?

ELF.

What!—and think so much of her, dear Athel-
 wold? [Inarming him.]

ATHELW.

Once she seemed fair, but now,—oh, now 'twere diff'rent!

Who seeing thee can aught conceive of beauty
Save what thou art or seem'st?

Elfrida's face is fairer than Rowena's,
Elfrida's form is rounder than Rowena's,

Elfrida's voice is gentler than Rowena's,

Elfrida's heart—oh! can that heart be kinder,
Or more forgiving, constant, true or tender?

[With emotion, averting his face.]

ELF.

That soon I'll prove to thee:—proceed no further,—

I do forgive thee all ere that thou ask'st it.

ATHELW.

Thou art not yet come to the mountain of my faults.

ELF.

How?—she was thy leman and the child's thy son!

ATHELW.

Quick intuition marks a woman's mind.

ELF.

And knowing this, what more remains to tell?

ATHELW.

Thou wilt not pardon when thou hast learned all.

ELF.

He twice offends who proffered pardon cavils.

ATHELW.

Basely I betrayed her to her ruin.

ELF.

That oft hath chanced and will while maids trust men.

ATHELW.

Who thus can speak feels not her sex's wrongs.

ELF.

Pooh!—should I weep for a strange girl, I wonder?

ATHELW.

Not weep, yet feel:—and feeling thou must censure.

ELF.

Thane, but I'm partial!—That's my woman's privilege. [Nestling up to him.]

ATHELW.

Meaning thou lov'st me much, forgiving fair one?

ELF.

Men too sometimes grasp things without deep pond'ring!

ATHELW.

O King, thou com'st in vain!—True love scorns coronets. [Falls at her feet.]

ELF.

What words low mutter'st thou with brow convulsed?

ATHELW.

Oh!—would'st lie in the King's bed at his bidding, say?

ELF.

'Sdeath!—To make wives harlots bait them with lewd jests.

ATHELW.

Nor said I this designing fresh affront.

ELF.

And what hadst thou in mind, speaking outrageously?

ATHELW.

There was a maid once saved by a mother's ruse.*

ELF.

But there were remedies besides hand-maidens! †

ATHELW.

And what hadst thou done, say, on like compulsion?

ELF.

A dagger plied at midnight had served the turn.‡

ATHELW.

O excellent courage! O sweet cheer and comfort!
The nun Editha § too suffered foul wrong.

ELF.

Now, out on thee!--Why harp'st thou on old scandals?

ATHELW.

But many virgins more have fared as ill.

*The daughter of the nobleman near Andover, whom Edgar demanded of her parents, like Pausanias did Cleonice at Byzantium.

†The name of the handmaiden immolated to save the high-born girl's chastity was Elfleda—a name already referred to in these notes.

‡Elfleda's disposition to *ply the dagger*—through other hands, at least—was evinced in the fate of Edward the Martyr, slain some years later at her instigation, after she had born Ethelred to Edgar.

§Edgar broke into a convent, carried off Editha, a nun, by force, and even committed violence on her person.—Hume.

ELF.

Have done!—Thy sex was never aught but disolute.

ATHELW.

Neither are young wives deemed insipid morsels.

ELF.

Man of strange moods!—comes the King hither, say?

ATHELW.

Thou hast guessed it!

[Striding away in agitation, he knocks down a table and chair on which a rich dress reposes.

ELF. (*wildly*)

O Heavens, my lord!—thy foot's on my new gown,—

Oh, dear, dear, dear, dear!—In mercy, move not!
Beseech thee, stir not!—thou wilt leave a rent else;

Now raise thy foot,—oh, those lace tassels!

Nay, gently, gently—patience! (*she extricates it—instantly her mood changes*)

Thou clumsy fellow!—couldst not see it, say?

My God, if thou hadst ruined it!—

What had I worn at the grand feast to-morrow?

I'm all a-tremble still and half distracted

O'er the mere thought!—Canst only stand and stare?

Thou dost not care—I see it in thy looks—

Though, really, I believe the train's all crumpled! [Down on her knees to examine it.

A'THELW.

Hah,—look not for mercy here!—Rave o'er her robe,
 But coldly moralize o'er a girl's destruction!—
 Concerned no more than curiosity prompted.
 What's hers—the least outweighs another's life!
 It comes in time.—O Night! where hidest thou
 Offa? [To the window again.]

ELF. (*looking up*)

Sweet, honey love, if I should meet the King
 Dost think he'd really like me?—Oh, grant he
 may!

I'll use him as ne'er man was used by woman,
 I'll purge him of his gallant disposition,
 I'll bring him to my feet with coy demureness,—
 There kill him with disdain.

[*Busy still with the dress.*

A'THELW.

Hah—wouldst thou?—It breeds already!
 Here's that old presumption which fills brothels.

ELF. (*getting up at length*)

How do I look, my love?—Does it become me?
 [*Flings the gown sparkling with jewels over
 her person and poses before him.*

A'THELW.

Thou look'st the QUEEN thou art, or rightly
 should'st be.

O fool, fool, fool!

[*Exit with gestures of despair.—ELFRIDA looks after him wonderingly, then sinks in a chair buried in thought. Presently, with a toss of her unbound hair and a light laugh, she goes to bed—which ends the scene.*

ACT V, SCENE III.—Before a dismantled out-house.—*A flash of lightning reveals ATHELWOLD in the doorway, clad in his rich silks and velvets.—The rain, falling in torrents, beats on his head unheeded.*

ATHELW.*

[*A cur snarls within.*

[*Plunges into the darkness.*

*Gentle reader, weary of soliloquies, the author leaves this to thy own imagination.

ACT V, SCENE IV.—Before OSBURGA'S cave.—
 KING EDGAR and retinue on the scene:—in the background, ROWENA with her child, OSBURGA, RODA, the OLD SAXON, REDWALD and HAKO— the latter a prisoner.

KING EDGAR (*giving a parcel to a noble*)
 This bundle to the castle:—be thou close-mouthinged. (*exit NOBLE*)

Wild spot!—strange stories fill thy solitude,
 But stranger legends still may grow from them:
 A tale of deep and stubborn heartlessness,
 Of furious lust, self-damning perfidy;
 A tale of craft o'er-spinning cunning toils,
 With retribution swift and terrible—
 The fate but darkly hinted yet adumbrant,—
 With these shall legend link a monarch's folly,
 And superstition chronicle th' issue.

(*Pulls out a ring and reading repeats:*—
 “*Losel, losel,*” etc.)

Human contrivance fulfills om'nous proph'cies!—
 Methinks this idle rhyme may serve some purpose. (*to ATT.*)

Fetch hither all ye found upon the brigands.

[ATTEND. *brings a bag to the KING*:—he opening it, out fall a skull, a dagger and some ashes.

KING EDGAR.

Hah, murder's tokens!—Whose bones are these?
 [To HAKO.]

HAKO (*defiantly*)

Put me in Olgar's castle and I'll answer thee.

ATTEND.

Here's more rubbish:—

Will't please your highness view these mumming shifts? [Opening another bundle.]

KING EDGAR (*turning over the articles*)

Seven devil's masks!—some monkish players' spoils.

What use couldst thou make of them, robber?

[To HAKO.]

HAKO (*with a wild, free air*)

What, may not poor hinds entertain their betters?
We planned some merriment at the castle, my masters,

And were on the way when ye fell foul of us,—
Now make what use ye will of them.

KING EDGAR.

Humph!—fellow, come hither—walk apart with me.

[The KING converses with HAKO. Scene ends.]

ACT V, SCENE V.—The same.—KING EDGAR *solus*.

KING EDGAR (*with gestures and motions indicating inward fury*)

He dies!—all things come handily to my will,—
He dies!

O King, thou topp'st all dupes—fond, credulous fool!—

Ay, there it stings—contempt o'er-venoms wrongs.
She's beautiful,—a thousand tongues affirm it;
He's cropped her bloom—hah, madd'ning thought!
Had he ten thousand lives ten thousand deaths
Were incomplete revenge:—he hath enjoyed her.
I'd cut his gorge myself with right good relish,

But that would trumpet forth my pitiful case,
 Fix on my name malignant satire's gibes,
 Make me the butt and fling of after ages:—
 Oh! cuckold and wittol soon were hon'able
 names—

No old man wedded to an am'rous girl
 Should be mocked more were Edgar's story pub-
 lished.

It shall not be!—I'll work my will i' the dark.

*Enter TWO ATTENDANTS with KENRIC,
 struggling.*

FIRST ATTEND.

A prize! A prize!

SEC. ATTEND.

A banished man!—We claim the King's reward.

KING EDGAR.

Kenric!—high-mettled thane, what dost thou
 here?

We meet in a strange place:—thy life's the for-
 feit.

KEN.

My liege, to look upon *her* face once more
 I held it cheap to risk the life thou claim'st.
 Alas! I thought not here to meet my King.

KING EDGAR.

Thou mean'st Elfrida—thane, I remember!
 Redwald is near too;—'twas he brought me
 hither:
 An accident hath somewhat calmed his mood.
 Here were made known to me some human na-
 tures

Hateful to look upon. (to ATT.) Unhand him,
sirrahs!

Away! (*exeunt* ATT.) My good Kenric, I pity
thee,—

Hark'ee, if thou dost serve me I may pardon.

[*Exeunt, the KING talking earnestly.*

ACT V, SCENE VI.—OLGAR'S castle.—An ante-chamber leading into the banquet-hall.—*Voices and the sound of musicians tuning their instruments heard from within. Servants laden with great burdens of drink and viands cross and re-cross continually.—Guests beginning to arrive,—visible in the corridor.—Finally when the room is empty*

Enter ATHELWOLD.

ATHELW. (*wearily*)

WHERE'S Offa?—the castle's dead without him.

No hint, no clue, no forebode!

Gone, vanished like a cloud of smoke at midnight,

He's left me to my fate, unknown his own.

Three days ago I scarce could take ten paces

Within, without, ere I encountered him.

Great God!

How like our lives to shadows on a screen,

That dance and gyrate on a summer's day,—

Cast by a swarm of buzzing, saucy flies,

Too frisk and wanton in the beam of noon:—

Idly we watch, and wonder at their motions,

But when some fitful gust obscures the sun,

Alas!—what happens?

We wink, perhaps, or flip an ear, and then
 We gaze again—ah me!—the gnats are gone,
 The scene is blank.—Such shadow-play's our life.

Enter a SERVANT.

SERV. (*giving a bundle*)

My lord, take this:—
 More of Offa will come presently. [Exit.]

ATHELW.

Dog! so abrupt?—Here slave, come back!—who
 gave't?

He slams the door—he's gone!—They wax unruly.

What's in thy belly, sack?

[Shakes open the bundle:—out drop OFFA'S cassock, crucifix and other belongings. He picks them up and holds them out in horror—a note flutters to his feet. He reads:

O Thelwyl, flee!—Beware of the feast—they mean thee no good—the King will be there. For Heaven's sake, flee!

How can she know?—More mystery lurks in that, But I'll not cudgel my wits to fathom it,— No time for riddles now!—I know the hand: She's truth itself that writ these lines—Rowena! And dost thou stoop to save me?—O sweet angel!

(kissing the paper passionately)

O'erwhelming goodness of a woman's heart!— Hah—the foil—

Enter ELFRIDA in royal magnificence, PAGES attending.

ELF.

Come, my love, in!—impatiently they await us.

ATHELW.

Oh, do they?—

How cheerfully she invites me to my death!

ELF.

What rubbish dost thou mutter?—The guests are assembled.

ATHELW.

The guests?—Hah—do thou name me the chief of them:—

Where sits death?

[*Running over and peering into the banquet room.*

ELF.

Death!

ATHELW.

At the right hand o' the host?—Most excellent!

'Tis e'en as it should be—the feast's in his honor.

ELF.

In death's honor!

ATHELW.

Where sits lies?

ELF.

Lies?

ATHELW.

And treason, perjury, lech'ry, adult'ry?

They're at all banquets where rich and great gather,

Ranking Duke Lickspit.

ELF.

Nay, take thy place and thou wilt know, perhaps!

[*Sweeps into the banquet hall.*

ATHELW.

Oh, truculent!—“Take thy place and thou wilt know”—

I do, I will!—Still, King, I wear a dagger!

[Exit after her.]

ACT V, SCENE VII AND LAST.—The banquet-hall.—ELFRIDA *advancing to her seat amid the applause of the guests, followed immediately by ATHELWOLD.*—The feast is spread in a great Gothic chamber, illuminated by numerous candelabra, but dimly; the walls are hung with tapestry of a somber hue, little relieved by festoons of flowers wreathed over trophies of war and the chase.—Music playing;—on a small stage a little remote jugglers and mountebanks performing.—Servants flitting to and fro among the mixed company.—The buzz of merry voices and music subside as OLGAR, seated at the head of the board beside the COUNTESS, rises and waves his hand.

OLGAR (*he hath tippled somewhat already*)

Welcome, my noble guests!—Welcome, kind friends!

Zounds! I could weep—this is the parting-feast—
But there's a gen'rous joy in hospitality
Forbids the tear, e'en though we lose our daughter:

The bridegroom bears his booty home to-night.
Ah, rogue!—to steal my child, my lovely girl!—
What arts didst thou employ?—We hang a thief,
But love commits house-breaking and marauding

Without e'en reprimand:—'twas youth's first offense,

Heired from the jocund hours of being's dawn,—
'Twill be youth's last, though spring and moon-beams fail.

Alack! — what man is guiltless? Sires have caused

Such partings in their time,—I know't, my friends!

And it is vain to cry out vengeance on him
When, luckless, I must plead to culprit judges;—
Nor will we trust the case to bachelors' envy,
All emulous of the crime, but pusillan'mous.

Heyday! God speed ye, couple!

Let stock-fish continence hug its withered sides,
And dream of agues!—youth and warm blood
needs comp'ny

When't goes to bed:—my blessing on't's proceedings!

None need blush

For that which makes the Creator's plans enduring.

Hark ye!—I'll pose ye, wise-heads:—

There is a common wish in bridegrooms' hearts,
And some brides share't—not all—fy! I'll not tell't—

But, yes! I will—when eve draws nigh, my hearers,

On the eventful day,

If any elf, kind sprite or great magician
Could grant his wish, what would the bride-groom ask?

Now bachelors, blush!—what would the bridegroom ask?

Widows, ye know't—what would the bridegroom ask?

The first day, mark!—what would the bridegroom ask?

(Lord Athelwold told it me a week ago,

But, so long married, now perhaps denies it)

What would the bridegroom ask?—An arctic night,

Zounds!

With morning six months off and slow a-dawning—

Ha, ha, ha!—that's what the bridegroom asks.

We drink the King's health, gentles!

[Cup-bearers ply their offices.]

ATHLW.

The host that borrows our throats doth buy our ears,

And pours what he lists in both,—this custom grants—

Make a wry face who durst! — But the jest's happy:—

Lord Olgar puts a riddle prettily,

And yet, I'll warrant, an his lordship knew

What scarce his dreams trench on, a certain bridegroom

Whom he well likes, should have his heartiest wish

For more than six months' slumber.—Ho, ho, ho!

Upon my soul, my merry compotators,

I love my—father-in-law!—and toast his health

With right good will. Oh, excellent, excellent!
May his jokes live long too! [Cup-bearers.]

Enter a PAGE.

PAGE.

Lord Olgar, some players wait thy will below:—
They'll entertain the company, with thy leave.

OLGAR.

Let them come on then when the feast's more toward. (exit PAGE)

Music, strike up!—And some young cavalier sing.
[Lively music.—Cup-bearers.]

DRINKING SONG.

Drain the bowl! Fill again! Come, maid at my side,

Touch the lip with thine own,—ho! wassail the bride.

We will drink to her eyes while they sparkle like thine,

And we'll quit—when they set in the fumes of the wine!

Come, sweetheart, once more!—this kiss is for me,—

I'm as good as the cup!—nay, maiden, be free.

Lone hearts sigh o'er the rose with the myrtle entwined,

But a bird whispers hope when another's grows kind.

Drain the bowl! Fill again! Come, maid at my side,

Touch the lip with thine own,—ho! wassail the bride.

CHORUS OF YOUNG THANES.

Lone hearts sigh, etc.

SEMI-CHORUS OF OLD THANES.

Drain the bowl! Fill again! Will we never get drunk?

*Ah! prod me that rogue in oblivion there sunk!
What, traitor! so soon?—Thou affront'st our good cheer,*

And shalt drink as a penance ten mugs of small beer.

[The cup-bearers crowd round an old thane, pretending him to be the offender—he protesting, all laughing. In the midst of this merriment enter one clad in a monk's habit, with a devil's face:—this figure marches directly up to ATHELWOLD and lays on the table before him an object covered with a black cloth.

A GUEST.

Peace, noisy thanes, peace! See, the play opens.

OLGAR (*disapprovingly*)

Too soon!

THE MASK (*to ATHELW.*)

Behold, my lord!

I bring the good friend for whom thy bowels yearn:—

Welcome Offa to the feast he made for thee.

[Pulls the pall away, revealing a death's head.

ATHELW. (*clutching the MASK*)

Dread shape!—what art thou?

Man or black fiend from Hell, I charge thee answer!

[*The MASK shakes him off and exit, laughing sardonically.*

OLGAR.

What, thane, so wild?—Pooh, 'tis only mumm'ry!
What, thane, what, I say!

[*Restraining ATHELW., who starts after the MASK.*

ATHELW.

No more of't, then!—"Tis uncanny foolery.
(shaking)

Ho! bring me wine.

OLGAR.

A play so daunt thy spirits, noble Athelwold?
Let them go on.—What ho! cup-bearers, more
wine!
Humph!—what inscription's here? (*picks up the skull and reads*) "I WAS OFFA!"

ELF..

Horrible, horrible! Alas! what tends this to?

OLGAR.

Nay, it takes on a serious aspect,—oh,
'Tis writ in red, too!—His own blood, mayhap.
"I WAS OFFA!"

ALFRED.

"Tis Offa's head, my lord!

I know it by the side fangs.

ELF.

And I.

OLGAR.

Truly, I fear it is.—
Fire seems to have partly consumed it.

ATHELW.

Give it me, Lord Olgar—damnation!—no?—
What, zounds!—hah,—heavens and earth!

[Secures the head.]

OLGAR.

The others come on now, look!—Ho, ho, ho!
Watch the play, my lord.—Marry, the rascals!
'Tis clever make-believe.

*Enter a group of DEVILS.**

ATHELW.

It wrecks my nerves.—Do thou ask why they
come,
What ghastly theme portray—I like it not.
(aside)
Can it be the King's contriving?

[He lays down the head.]

OLGAR.

Marry, they took a start out of me, too.
What are ye, devil-maskers? [To the players.]

FIRST DEVIL.

The devils of Lodbrog's ring, if ye will—fiends
come to fulfill a prophecy. Or ye may know us
as the horned seven that love Athelwold, the
bridegroom.

*The latter part of the last scene of the last act, where the devils—originally seven—enter, became unwittingly in the first draught an imitation of the interrogation of the *Seven Deadly Sins* by Faustus, in Marlow's play of that name. This tragedy the author had not seen for years, and before the coincidence dawned on him Oigar had already be-dialogued all seven devils;—the text, however, was immediately cut down into the form in which it now appears in *The Faithless Favorite*,—further than this the conscience of the author did not urge him to go. The item is given for what it is worth,—as a proof merely that the human mind is a fiddle on which new performers will occasionally scrape some of the notes of an old tune.

[*The DEVILS* dance about ATHELWOLD'S chair.]

OLGAR.

Lodbrog's ring?—Again that old heirloom!
Whence got ye the idle tale of Lodbrog's ring? *
Well I recall that prophecy:—(*repeats "Losel, losel," etc.*)

Elfrid, that ring thou gav'st unhappy Redwald.

ELF.

I gave it him in jest to prove traditions,—
Pooh!

OLGAR.

In youth we flout tradition, saw and precept,
But, growing old, industriously add to them.

(*the DEVILS stop dancing*)

Now for th' infernal roll-call:—hark!—attention!
What wast thou in front, born devil or earth-son?

FIRST DEVIL.

Earth-son I, of the type:—a handsome, young gallant, concupiscential, intemperate, given night and day to wh—dom and adultery—betraying, dishonoring, debauching, mocking all virtue. But at last I stole the King's mutton and was hung for it. My lines are done;—I'll kiss the bride now, by your leave, and begone to some kind maid's bed.

*King Regnar Lodbrog, the warrior-poet of the Danes, so cruelly put to death by the Northumbrians, is the subject of many legends and superstitious stories. We have already noted the "Raven," the victory-ushering banner vested with magical powers presumably by reason of having been made by his daughters. Thence is it that the prophetic ring of this play is whimsically associated with his name;—it has, of course, no basis in history.

OLGAR.

That thou shalt not, filth—stand back, pestilence!
And what wast thou, the second?

SEC. DEVIL.

A priest—but I'll not speak a word more without wine:—I have not lately been to communion. Do thou read this aloud, my lord; my breath's stinted.

[Takes a paper out of the skull's mouth and hands it to OLGAR.]

OLGAR (*reads*)

He confesses: “*three murders—Ina and the two peasants.*” This I, Hako, saw.

He confesses: “*putting up Athelwold to steal the King's bride-elect, the Lady Elfrida, thinking to command her fortune.*”

He confesses: “*putting Rowena, Hako's sister and Athelwold's WEDDED WIFE, in a mad-house, SANE.*”

He confesses: “*twenty more unspeakable villainies not pertinent, under promise that it will save his life.*”

(signed) Offa the priest.

Then he died. (signed) Hako the outlaw.

ATHELW. (*aside*)

Now may he be the King! (*aloud*)

Excellent devil!—thou giv'st the cue—die thou!

Thou know'st too much to live.

[Kills the SECOND DEVIL.—*An outcry.*

FIRST DEVIL.

A vow, a vow! Thou mad'st a vow, my soul!

[Stabs ATHELWOLD—at the signal the other MASKS fall on him with equal fury.]

OLGAR.

Help, ho, without! Ho, murder, murder!

[Uproar and tumult. The guests close in on the intruders, and OLGAR'S retainers running in at his cry, some of them rush out and escape:—those that remain are soon finished.]

A NOBLE (*unmasking a body*)

Look, my lord, look!—this devil's Redwald.

ANOTHER (*ditto*)

This Kenric.

OLGAR.

What!—they our enemies?

They have their deserts then—cover them. Alas! Vengeance plans bloody deeds—O fell conspiracy!

Enter KING EDGAR disguised, leading in ROWENA with her child.

ROW. (*a moment speechless, then shrieks*)

Too late, too late! O King, he's dead, he's dead!

(rushing to ATHELWOLD, etc., etc.)

See, see, he's dead! O bloody, fatal issue!

Was this thy promise, brother fell as death?

(starts up with a poniard in her hand)

False King! or thine? (*shaking it at him*) Alas! for human hopes

And human plans!—O babe, my babe, my babe!

(falls on her knees)

There's no deceit in this! (*stabs her child*) No!—none—none—none! [Kills herself.

OLGAR.

"Tis mad Meg.—Alack! mad Meg no more:

Death cures that too. I am somewhat dazed—

The prophecy nears fulfillment:—six lie dead,
And yon's the skull—

KING EDGAR.

An agency above our will impels us
To acts perverse, to consummate our fate.
Oh! cover them all up and hear me.

OLGAR.

Who art thou, fellow with her? Masked foes
abound—

Ho! seize him. [Several start for the KING.

KING EDGAR (*unmasking*)

I am the King! (*they fall back*)

Go, revelers, fetch ye pall and funeral robes,
And turn your jocund notes to dirge and plaint,
Mourning her death whose form yet quivers
yonder:

Alas, her story is most pitiful! (*turns to OLGAR*)

Unmannerly thane, we came to right some
wrongs,

But death prevents in part.—She that bleeds
there

Was wedded to the false and perjured villain
Erstwhile our fav'rite—e'en faithless Athelwold.
Unhappy damsel!

Her mad precipitance balks justice's ends.
The devilish spider's dead that spun the web
Whose mesh caught bigger flies, not less unwary.
Oh!—thou shalt wonder, thane, another time—
Narrative's out of place where death holds revel:
Suffice the King asserts, nor strong proofs lack-
ing,

All that thou read'st is true.

OLGAR.

O King, his wife?—Alas! what's then my child?
KING EDGAR.

Thou touch'st the quick. (*devouring ELFRIDA*)
O! she's as beautiful as an orient morning—
Report, which rates her high, falls short th'
orig'nal.

Hark thou, thane!

The traitor-villain wrought a multiple wrong,
Thou know'st but part:—Oh! at his sovereign's
mandate

He came to thee—to make thy child my Queen—
Not for himself he came but for his King.

What is she now?—Alas! [He sighs.]

ELF. (*with spirit*)

Why, good my liege, under your gracious favor,
A Saxon maid!—I'll swear't upon the book.

OLGAR.

Saxon chastity and maidenly reluctance,

My lord—

KING EDGAR.

She is my Queen, then—now, that prophecy!

It needs but this.—Oh, I believe ye! (*repeats
"Losel," etc.*)

'Tis most curiously fulfilled—how, balks conjecture.

Here's a ring with a legend, my lord—(*to OL.*)
know'st it?

OLGAR. What, thou hast it?

An heirloom fabled to come from Lodbrog's
finger.

Three months ago, in girlish sportiveness,

Elfrida gave it to a teasing thane,
 Misdoubting fate and malign influences,
 And thus it comes again—

KING EDGAR.

Excellent thane, we parley over-long,
 Making a tragic theme a comedy.

A few words more and then good night:
 The traitor wore my signet on his finger
 To vouch his mission—ah! 'tis there yet.

[*The KING stoops and pulls a ring off ATHELWOLD'S finger.*

OLGAR.

Oh, he stirs!

KING EDGAR.

Nay, doth he?—Excellent! — Ho! dog, hear'st thou?

The bride is mine, villain—see! I claim her.

[*Embracing her, the KING puts his ring on ELFRIDA'S finger.*

ATHELW.

Thou—art—very—welcome.—O Rowena!

[*Dragging himself towards ROWENA'S body with this wild cry on his lips, ATHELWOLD falls over and expires.*

AN ATTEND. (*after a pause*)

Here's one yet alive, my lord—

Though at the last gasp.

KING EDGAR (*stooping*)

'Tis the outlaw—now, sirrah! what of Offa?

Thou didst promise to reveal his fate—how died he?

HAKO (*turning*)

Ha, ha, ha! [Dies.—*Here the tragedy ends.*

EPILOGUE.

Enter the TWO OFFICERS.

THE LONG ONE.

THE WATER BEING COLD—

THE SHORT ONE.

Desist, villain. O Lord! thou hast been three acts and twenty-odd scenes telling thy impudent story, and art not done bathing the widow yet.

T. L. O.

Ha, ha, ha! Has the audience fared better? Look!—they prick up their ears, seeing me:—lewdness by innuendo makes even chaste minds prurient. LADIES AND GENTLEMEN!—

[*The other stops his mouth.*

Enter an ACTOR in deshabille, with the mask and costume of OFFA, trailing.

ACTOR (*sings*)

Fol, de rol, dol!—Why, ho there!—what the deuce—the play's done.—Oh, ten thousand pardons!

[*Catching sight of the audience he would retire, but the others hold him.*

T. L. O.

Ah! my story shall be the epilogue.

T. S. O.

O Lord!

[*Runs off.*

ACTOR.

Epilogue? That belongs to the COUNTESS OF DEVONSHIRE, our excellent mother-in-law-supposed-to-be and model for women. Poor COUNTESS!—she has not a word in the whole play.

Enter the COUNTESS with THE SHORT ONE by the ears.

COUNTESS.

Such is the malice of men! What do these worthless fellows here? Usurp my epilogue, too? No more, then—we'll have no epilogue. View the play as ye see fit, my hearers,—(*courtesying*) and hiss as ye have ability to judge. God have mercy on us!—I know there are excellent heads among ye—sober, earnest men who go gravely about a fornication. Ah!—I hear them.—“Why were those rascals put on at all!” True, why?—Talkative clowns!—what parts had they?—None. “Detain the audience, too, that never entertained them!” Egregious fault!—But, ah! it helps verisimilitude:—out on the great stage, in all walks of life, are many supercargoes, who, doing nothing, cumber the scenes—and keep on talking after the PLAY is over.

[*Exeunt omnes.*

POST-FACE:

or,

A BOLUS FOR DIGESTION.

I.

Reader, hast thou a ruling passion? In shame and secrecy hast thou fostered it many years; unrewarded, hast thou yet labored for it; made miserable by it, hast thou yet loved it—thy being, nook and cranny, filled with devotion akin to ecstacy? Disappointed, hast thou seen, as it were, the sun blotted from thy firmament?—Baffled, hast thou lived unconquered; anguished in spirit, hast thou returned yet again wittingly to disappointment? Hast thou done these things not knowing thou wast strong in the true faith, but reproaching thy own weakness? Hast thou done these things inevitably as the water tumbling from the great height—knowing not, determining not its own course? Hast thou done them like Socrates, deeming divinity within thee—the stirrings of a great purpose agitating the passionate soul?

Hast thou been a stranger in thine own land, alien in thine own city, solitary in the midst of the concourse—a thing apart, of another time, another place? Gloomy, diffident and unhappy from thy intellectual dawn, yet in another's eyes but proud, illiberal or uncouth—hath at times the *great weariness* stolen over thee?

Then may'st thou, perhaps, understand the author; then may'st thou, perhaps, *read* the book. But if, knowing none of these things, thou art one living shallowly in the over-insistent and extuberant *now*; if thou only fillest thy nostrils with the sweet, delusive scent of the nosegay of life—plucking away the petals of thy years contentedly oblivious of the meaning of all—then get thee again to thy romance and read not these pages. Reader—but stop! Perhaps I discourse only to a vision—turn we to the reality, poor as it may be.

II.

Why art thou, book? How and why didst thou come out of the womb of nothing, taking form from what has not form, substance from what has not substance, pulse, passion and motion from what has not pulse, passion or motion? Why didst thou not become a novel?—Art willing to meet with neglect from levity, misconception from ignorance, detraction from malignity? Dost thou think, perhaps, to escape those things autochthonous to the cipher—the unsexed woman's mind, the magazine literator and the couranto smatter-wit? And if thou dost not, offending this, the triumvirate of the modern intellectual world by thy robustness, how canst thou hope to escape being pilloried? Will not thy fate be utterly forlorn and pitiful?

But, ah, somewhere—O! — somewhere amongst the unoracular majority; somewhere amongst the innumerable obscure—feeling still is feeling—and not sentiment; passion still passion—and not eroticism; thought still thought—and not dictum;

ignorance still ignorance—and not prose fiction. Literatus or enlightened proletarian, wherever thou art, before the tribunal of thy fair mind I plead and make my charges.

The novel, the magazine and the leveling incubus—club, guild, society, association, congress, call it what ye please—these are the prime sources of our homunculism in literature, art and philosophy; the magazine, as now conducted, being the chief abomination—e'en the age's handy midwife for all ditch-begotten issue. Hath a man a glimmering of an idea?—Let him seek it in vain, tumbling down five thousand words in his desperate struggles for light; and, having failed to find it, take his gallimatia and send it to a magazine—where it belongs—and it will be welcomed as “available,” ripe and timely—provided:

The perpetrator is rich,

- “ “ hunts bears,
- “ “ holds or held office,
- “ “ owns a yacht,
- “ “ belongs to clubs,
- “ “ is an actor,
- “ “ buys, or has friends that buy, advertising space,
- “ “ ’s wife divorced him,
- “ “ ’s daughter married an European leper,
- “ “ ’s wife invited the editor’s wife,
- “ “ knows dialect better than English,
- “ “ is not really guilty of thinking,
- “ “ is not really capable of writing,
etc., etc.

In short, anything, everything prevails in that quarter except poor, negligible, old-fashioned merit. Merit must come well recommended, like a footman, if it presumes to hope for even an impatient, perfunctory hearing; must sit without, like Samuel Johnson, suffering rebuff and contumely while potsherd greatness entertains lackey or prostitute. With women, *mutatis mutandis*, as with men:—but in general, the accident of femality in this gentle, gynecocratic age is not less auspicious than was once primogeniture under the royal purple.

Should the bathologist, favorably circumstanced as above indicated, desire to nuncupate immediately he can deliver his flatulence with *eclat* before some society or congress for the perpetuation of mediocrity—the place where asses bray and dominate while merit blushes in the background.

This much *en passant*—leap we now back within our own hedge—let us limit our diffident remarks to literature.

As the literaure of a land so, too, must its art be—art, that subsidiary birth whose votaries dwell not within the inner temple; that handmaiden who, lovely though she be, appeals not to the full conclave of mind, understanding being forever slighted and irreconcilable.

Respecting philosophy, silence is pertinent:—in the true sense of great-hearted wisdom it exists not at all save in memory.

The novel is the incestuous monster springing from the loins of Ignorance cohabiting with Vanity:—incestuous obviously, since none will deny that the twain are within prohibited degrees

of consanguinity.—Born in the dark ages, its redundancy covers the earth:—novelists are the lice of literature and, like all vermin, multiply prodigiously. Vanity is an harlot that goes to bed with many strange humors:—outsides change or are decked up differently, as caprice or fickleness dictate, the leprous body remains leprous forever—the grotesqueness of the romance hath passed, the insufferably nauseous monotony and barrenness of the puling love intrigue remains.

Language, quoth Talleyrand, was given to conceal thought—nay, demur I, it was given to escape thinking:—cannot an average novelist write forty pages consecutively without once lapsing into thought? Multiplicity of works conjoined with meagerness of wit, imagination, knowledge, understanding—these are the distinguishing characteristics of an hodiernal author:—honorable word, canst thou really be synonymous with novelist? He has the merit of fecundity?—Ay!—so the scrofulous mother is oft the most fertile of women. He writes vehemently and abominably under the influence of the *furor scribendi*, never because there is matter in his mind which *must* be delivered, like the jocund boy gone to full term in the rejoicing bride's matrix—the true origin of good books. Alas!—it is only with the novelist like the wight with dysentery:—both go oft to stool yet void nothing but slime. We will not forgive him, then, for his inveteracy:—the more hardened the criminal the more inexorably let him be judged.

Another characteristic of the species is covetousness, insatiability:—long toying with the mother,

the pseudo-biographist must now also debauch the daughter. We have already given the pedigree of the novel:—the modern stage is one of the by-bairns of its mother, Mistress Vanity, begotten on her by a mask, a wig or a dash of red paint—'tis uncertain which.

Miserable and barren stage!—They that turn novels into plays for thee are impecunious rogues who, owning but one piece of cloth, must needs have both cloak and coat out of it. Cunning novelists!—Ye are like the husbandman in the famine—feeding the offal of one pen to the pigs in the next sty. Simple public!—Who are the pigs? But we leave the cloaca.

III.

Book, it is obvious why thou didst not become a novel; but, ah, how principles rob us of shekels! Were it not for the love of them and thee, my book, I would have written, with the assured prospects of becoming rich, a far different work:—I would have written *Pucella Hugboy*:—or, *The Curious History of One Who Had Measles and Was Happily Married Ten Years Afterwards—A Novel Jejune a la Mode*. But magnanimity is its own reward!

My book, thou art speckled with faults, like a great statesman's policy or a lovely complexion under a lens. I will name them as I see them:—to the extent that self-love permits perspicacity to gaze upon its own back.

[CATALOGUE OF FLAWS AND OBJECTIONS; OR,
A HANDY SYLLABUS FOR ZOILUS.]

- 1.—*That the thing was written at all.*
- 2.—*Looseness of construction.*
- 3.—*Archaisms.*
- 4.—*Length.*
- 5.—*Imitation.*
- 6.—*Nastiness.*
- 7.—*Ruggedness.*
- 8.—*Impiety and blasphemy.*
- 9.—*Turgidness.*
- 10.—*Tautology, battology, perissology.*
- 11.—*Olla-podridaism.*
- 12.—*It does not conform to the unities.*
- 13.—*It is not as good as Shakespeare's best.*
- 14.—*It is not as sublime as Aeschylus.*
- 15.—*The oft-reiterated "ha-ha-has!"*
- 16.—*Why don't it tell what HAKO did to OFFA?*
- 17.—*Why don't it finish the LONG OFFICER'S story?*
- 18.—*Why was the wrong OUTLAW hung?*
- 19.—*Wasn't that inscription too long for a ring?*
- 20.—*What does "losel" mean?*
- 21.—*It should have been burnt after the first scene.*
- 22.—*Was the author ever baptized?*
- 23.—*It is IMPOSSIBLE—the COUNTESS must have said something.*
- 24.—*All the songs.*
- 25.—*Epilogue's too long.*
- 26.—*The author is wise to use a privileged character as his PROLOGUE—he can give vent*

to the scurrility seething within him without being held accountable:—who shall call the fool to task?

- 27.—*Larceny.*
- 28.—*It don't rain just because you want to rhyme.*
- 29.—*Why didn't he steal all of Marlow?*
- 30.—*Do gypsies buy grown girls?*
- 31.—*Were there any at all at that time?*
- 32.—*Did KING EDGAR have a palace at London?*
- 33.—*Isn't Heaven something else besides "high"?*
- 34.—*Was the werewolf enchanted—or just a big wolf?*
- 35.—*Are hexameters good form in blank verse?*
- 36.—*Why didn't he use INA'S ghost?*
- 37.—*Why don't he let OLGAR sum up at the end?*
- 38.—*Some things have been said before.*
- 39.—*Sterne suggested that blank scene.*
- 40.—*Will he get as much as INULF—after HAKO acted?*
- 41.—*Satire should be plainer.*
- 42.—*Dare he do it again?*
- 43.—*Why didn't he show the KING in his palace pining to hear from ATHELWOLD?*
- 44.—*Do., raging over ATHELWOLD'S note?*
- 45.—*Why didn't he bring Editha or Elfleda into the play?*
- 46.—*God forgive the printer! man never will—nor woman.*
- 47.—*If put on the stage, would it be over in three days?*
- 48.—*Did REDWALD ever hear of Zoroaster?*
- 49.—*Did ROWENA ever hear of Niobe?—Or study ontology?*

- 50.—*Why didn't he make OSBURGA a real witch?*
- 51.—*Were the TWO OFFICERS policemen?*
- 52.—*He had Aesop in mind in that first scene.*
- 53.—*Did REDWALD really have coat, cloak, shirt and breeches?*
- 54.—*Tom Thimblewit?—Fudge!*
- 55.—*A mob would hardly be afraid of one woman.*
- 56.—*ATHELWOLD comes too opportunely there.*
- 57.—*Was OSBURGA the midwife?*
- 58.—*HAKO'S too pseudo-poetical for a robber.*
- 59.—*The world may be too small for a woman's greed, but it's too big for her lap.*
- 60.—*OFFA'S too, too bloody.*
- 61.—“*Supernumerary horrors.*”
- 62.—*What did INA'S son that was “set over the serfs” do about it?*
- 63.—“*A Saxon maid?*”—Well, hardly—after a week.
- 64.—*Ignorant authors WILL use mystery to circumvent difficulties.*
- 65.—*The Saxons were rude, but never as rude as this lot.*
- 66.—*Songs are supposed to possess some harmony.*
- 67.—*ATHELWOLD should have confessed for dramatic effect just before entering scene last.*
- 68.—*Those cup-bearers are not busy enough.*
- 69.—*Even mysteries and moralities were unknown.*
- 70.—*OLGAR'S speech is too rotten even for one who “hath tippled somewhat already.” A post-prandial witticaster of our own day*

- could not be nastier at the orgies of a party of bankers.*
- 71.—*Is it certain that ROWENA could write—or ATHELWOLD read?*
- 72.—*Act V, Scene IV.—ex post facto vaticination.*
- 73.—*Too many elisions.*
- 74.—*ELFRIDA too shallow, and too modernishly made.*
- 75.—*Dogs are not inspired.*
- 76.—*Act IV, Scene IV—ROWENA too iambically acatalectic for deep grief.*
- 77.—*Act IV, Scene II—it was wrong to give the MONKS the privilege—why not virago nuns?*
- 78.—*It is not certain what is meant by Lord Smallaxltree.*
- 79.—*The heart speech a suggestion.*
- 80.—*It is not certain but what the COUNTESS says is the best IN the play.*
- 81.—*The ha-ha-has are probably the most intelligible parts of the dialogue.*
- 82.—*Couldn't any one else know "THELWY"—ATHELWOLD'S pet name?*
- 83.—*He evidently killed INA to avoid bothering OFFA—and himself—with that imbroglio in the later scenes.*
- 84.—*The plot's over-loaded everywhere.*
- 85.—*Ossa heaped on Pelion—why didn't he let the KING kill ATHELWOLD himself, as history saith he did?*
- 86.—*A meeting between HAKO and ROWENA prior to Act III would have shown the true dramatist.*

- 87.—*Making a letter-box out of the skull's MOUTH comports well with his other tricks.*
- 88.—*Act II, Scene I*—it is not certain that this is a perfect parable for anybody.
- 89.—“*Five acts and thirty-odd scenes*” too many.
- 90.—Too much medical lore.
- 91.—The author is evidently a disappointed man.
- 92.—The author is evidently a spiteful man.
- 93.—The author is evidently a misogynist and misogamist.
- 94.—The author is evidently an envious man.
- 95.—“*The author!*”—Is he an author?
- 96.—He knows nothing of drama.
- 97.—He knows nothing of poetry.
- 98.—He knows nothing of history.
- 99.—There is not a good speech in the play save, as already remarked, what the COUNTESS says IN it.
- 100.—Anile decrepitude.
- 101.—Couldn't ROWENA leave it in the cradle once in a while?
- 102.—He might at least have ended happily—by stopping at the first scene!

Heigh-ho!—We will let the critics tell the rest;—if indeed this scheme of *every man his own critic* does not put them all out of business.

SCHEDIASM.



SCHEDIASM.

(*Detached lines and paragraphs scribbled desultorily, as the term implies, on loose sheets of paper.*)

MAN is a captive dwelling in a prison-house having five windows and one door; and this postern, alas! opens only when the walls crumble and fall to pieces. One comfort have we,—we can touch the spring of destruction whenever we list. But, as a rule, men will be found well content to look out of the little windows the allotted number of years, and to put up betimes with the hard fare,—seasoned, it may be, with a little grumbling.

LIKE her young sister, Art, to hireling swine
Hath Letters fall'n a prey, once trade divine;
And in an age which false ideals deface
To fail's success, and to succeed, disgrace:
Hence, like Antisthenes, suspect thyself
If from thy time come friendship, praise or pelf.

Who feels must love women for their beauty, their sprightliness, their self-sacrificing tender-heartedness; who thinks, must hate them for their paltriness, their affectations, their falsehoods. In short, the heart goeth out to women for what nature hath done for them, the understanding arraigns them for what they do to themselves.

Good deeds preach well;—precept without example
Plays but the nagging cur at the steed's heels.

SCHEDIASM.

VALUE not anything too highly,—why shouldst thou be disappointed? Despise not anything too utterly,—why must thou be unjust?

DEEP musing doth reveal the lore of God,—
And thou canst mine more poetry in thy heart
Than ever moonstruck bard did mar in meter.

A CERTAIN kind of wind, making its exit, fills the air with nastiness;—vile men exposed, making their exit, fill the air with calumnies.

HE plows a furrow in the street
Who teacheth lore for life unmeet.

THE world, with its uniform, unrelieved mediocrity running through innumerable inconsequential lives, broken only at long intervals by the epiphany of a great man, reminds me of the ocean, which hides countless millions under a surface giving no hint of it, save when a solitary leviathan rises to strike the beholder with awe and astonishment.

THE politician's like the wh—e,—who fees
Buys favors:—like? Nay, I disparage
The wh—e!—She sells her own wares, not the state's.

THE symptoms of decay:—a failing memory, a cold fancy and a timid heart.

WHO shuns shoes laughs at kibes,—
Who scorns praise defies gibes.

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STAND on the bridge arching the waterway of a great city—what canst thou see? The GREAT TENT above; diminutive animalculae flitting about below, incessantly active; houses, quays, boats,—the works of man everywhere. What thoughts come to thee here? This chiefly:—insignificant and impuissant as man is in the scale of universal grandeur, God, looking down on him from the throne of infinitude, must himself marvel greatly at the cleverness and diligence of the little earth-domineering puppet. Yes! I cannot but believe that he must be benevolently amused and well pleased with our works, as done under natural impulse, despite all that moralists and hell-dreamers prate of.

PURSUITS ignoble breed ignoble minds,—
For, howsoe'er opposed, our thoughts still flow
In the narrow channel of our daily lives.

LET not him who would play the philosopher recognize his own age, but make a composite of all ages; let him not recognize his own country, but make a composite of all countries—so shall he find age and country.

SHIFT of need is not thy deed.

PHILOSOPHY is not a science, but all sciences; it is not an art, but all arts; it is not a religion, but all religions; it is not a cult, but all cults.

FANCY, the spendthrift of thought, turns the key in the lock of existence and opens up all its treas-

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ures. Reality is a poorhouse and they that dwell in it are paupers;—realism in letters and art is only jejunity.

THE bow must be stretched full length,
Or the shaft will not speed;
And the heart must be in the work,
Or it cannot succeed.

SLEEP late,—weep late.

To say that a woman flirts means that she sedulously catches men on the hook of concupiscence, and then gleefully watches 'em dangling on't.

FEAR to rue,—fear to do.

VAIN the plying of the pump when the well is dry,—vain the writing without the deep impulse.

WELL begun is half done:—but he fares ill in the race who lags at the base.

'Tis an excellent thing to dig deep as the soil permits,—and excellent to stir a man to his depths.

MECHANICAL mind of a material age,
That naught conceives save what pertains to matter,
Know this:—the fabric of the world
Was reared on dreams, chimerae and delusions—
Mere spider-film!

SCHEDIASM.

Fix thy thoughts on lofty themes,—so shalt thou escape the pitfalls of pettiness which everywhere abound in this tinsel world. Compare each thing with something greater:—this house is large—ay, but the city is larger—this city is large—ay, but the world is larger; this world is large,—ay, but the stars are larger. Great things give the measuring-rod for little things.

UNPRODUCTIVE means destructive.

LEAD the fool's life,—you will not lack the fool's thoughts.

ALL is fuel to a great fire:—genius cannot be quenched,—a strong man's deep purpose not long obstructed.

HOPES in reason blow in season.

WHAT is truth but the unmasked face of things; understanding, but the recognition of truth; the love of truth, but the love of understanding? The first step towards wisdom, then, is truth:—without this there can be no wisdom, and he who forsakes truth puts a veil over nature's features, and seeth nevermore.

VIEWED from the standpoint of a thousand years,
The noblest work of human hands is temp'rary,
Like nest or rabbit-hole,—serves ends as paltry—
And what's a thousand years t' eternity?

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A PRETTY woman is a creature who, abroad or at home, goes about with a great bag of vanity in which she deposits compliments, ogles, lover's sighs and other pleasant memories:—and as the bag is full or empty that life is happy or discontented.

THE ankle's but the prelude to the tale,
And some maids learn, who, t' entice the male,
Lift i' the crowded street the gauzy skirt,
Viewing askance imaginary dirt:—
Fond girl!—he'll come—perchance to thy mishap,
Since oft in cities am'rous youths have cl--p.

WHEN thou art big with thought forget not that
Midwife Brevity will make a short labor on't.

BEAUTY is a kind of bribe, making us unfair to
those that have it not.

FOR presumption, affliction; for vanity, solitude—
these are the remedies.

THOU canst say to most rich men:—thy house I
may envy, yes!—but not the head thou livest in.

ABILITY depends on habits:—a good tool may be
spoiled with ill using, and a rich field with ill
sowing may become barren.

ALL is salt that runs into the sea:—eschew the
world, O youth!

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STICK thy hand in a chimney—it cannot come out white:—walk with evil men—thou canst not long be blameless.

FOR a nightingale, the lonely spray; for the cricket, a quiet hearth—and solitude for the poet.

A FROWARD maid is fast a jade.

HE who reads many books with little reflection hearkens to a Babel of various-counseling voices, and in the end, though his fancy be fitfully stimulated, yet shall his judgment suffer only confusion as a reward for his assiduity. Still, variety of books is the spice of reading, and that mind inevitably grows heavy and unhealthy whose thoughts brood ever on the low boughs of fact, disdaining to soar upward into the clear sunlight of fancy. The matter-of-fact writer with his tardigradous thoughts, though he may instruct, can never entertain,—as one who always wears boots cuts but a sorry figure at a dance—and piquancy and excusiveness, the agreeable features of a book, are not less necessary to the receptive mind than learning and profundity. Good sauces aid digestion, but he only shows his willingness to benefit his heir who sups on them:—thus the reader starves his understanding who devours only works of imagination. Wisdom dictates a mixed diet,—a little light and a little heavy reading, judiciously selected according to the humor. The capacity must govern the indulgence, not forgetting that what surfeits you may famish your neighbor.

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IF many the glass bad wine will pass.

LET a man regard the opinions of others and he will be like popcorn spluttering in a red-hot toaster,—hither, thither, no-whither and back again. For ever lost is that soul to tranquillity.

THE play takes your mind abroad while your legs depend idly under a chair; it is indeed a superior species of travel, unfolding to our view, if not natural scenery, at least the best, bravest and comeliest of all ages, all climes, without expense or inconvenience. This implies, of course, capacity in the actors, a good drama and correct costumes and stage scenery.

MODESTY is excellent, but the base self-diffidence which often passes for it is only cowardice, only self-repudiation. The finger that lit the sun put certain powers in me;—I am no more responsible for their origin or activity than the sun is for its light:—consequently, when I state and show by act and deed that such and such powers exist in me, I do not brag—I glorify God.

As age advances Fancy folds her weary pinions, and thought, bat-like, flitting near the earth, confines its excursions to the commonplace. But even here, if we see but deeply enough, exists romance galore and novelty; for the grim facts of the world—its works—each and every one of them was once, mayhap, a dream or chimera; each and every one of them is a monument to some dead imagination

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—of imagination, the pathfinder in all human progress.

WE are not to be censured for attempting great things, but rather commended:—a worm, if it so elects, may crawl some distance up the highest mountain.

CATCH plague, spread plague:—thou ow'st it not less to others than to thyself to escape contamination.

WOMAN—let me see, what is woman, to put it epigrammatically? She is the nib of the pen which has written the world, but, like all points, sometimes squeaks abominably. She is the wick in the lamp of life, but, egad! all wicks occasionally need trimming. She is the inspiration of the noblest in the realm of imagination, the vilest in physical life;—the abacus on which the wise man counts off the follies of humanity in the kindergarten of an imbecile world. Caprice leads her, vanity rides her, destruction walks in her train;—but in her heart alone abides the true love; and the chosen fondling she sometimes wrecks will she more often succor, though it be to her own desolation.

WHERE speech is barren silence may be good compost.

THAT excellent institution of civilization, Marriage, is simply an orderly covenant with Venus, designed to bring an individual to the same altar

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each time he makes his hebdomadal or bis-hebdomadal sacrifices to this powerful goddess; thus averting confusion, quarrels and bickerings, not to speak of those minor infelicities which Rabelais had in mind, when, kneeling down before the statue of a certain king, he thanked God for the licentiousness of his troops,—or rather for the filthy lucre accruing therefrom unto ye goodman, the physician. But, as the world reeks with adultery and married men maintain the majority of brothels—counting those with one inmate—the value of the nuptial knot is, in our day, somewhat dubitable.

MEN are responsible for woman's pride
And insolence, for they bow down and sue,
And constantly, in most unmanly fashion,
Surfeit her greedy vanity with flatt'ries,—
Though they might fare well enough, being straightforward.

TRUE praise is the good word of thy master.

A BLEAT is a bray in a ram's mouth:—an old fool cozened by women, blabbing his troubles, finds many mockers.

'TIS woman's age,—presumption marks her progress:—
She, in the eve of art, some things essaying
Which men did well for ages, vaunts herself
Not equal, but superior; and new entered,
Still screeching out of tune, would lead life's chorus.

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THE philosopher is a poet whose deeds are writ in meter, not his words.

RHYME and reason are two deer and flee contrariwise:—then chase one or catch none.

CRITICS are still like dogs,—all raise their legs where one has left his nastiness.

THE cultured reader converses with his books,—the ignorant listens, rapt and open-mouthed.

ONE object of the drama is to hold up the mirror of greatness to our own little lives, and shame our meanness:—then let low characters be sparingly used.

PRAISE is a destroyer, vanity diggeth her own grave. He thinks little who is self-satisfied, he less who wars with the inevitable.

My soul said to the flame, Give me thy power; my soul said to the bird's wings, Give me thy swiftness. But they answered, "Fool! thou canst have woman's love,—what wouldest thou with us?"

CIVILITY means contributing your mite to the sum of general peace and comfort.

FOOLS trip along the street of life unnoticed and unnoting; moving in oblivion, they fall into the ditch.

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READING is only assisted thought:—if thou dost lean too much, remember, thou mayst soon be unable to walk alone.

INTEREST blurs reason's spectacles; — thoughts change as hearts incline.

LONG-SPLINTED arms wax useless:—so do minds O'er-wrapped with learning's bands.

LIVE in a low hut—you will learn to stoop; consort with little minds—you will adopt their ways.

BREVITY keeps abreast of thought,—prolixity is soon distanced.

Not to fame let the monument be reared, for it needs it not, and hath, besides, its reward; but let it be reared to commemorate genius blasted in youth, merit pining in obscurity without inspiration or encouragement, virtue long suffering in secret without murmur or plaint. Alas! these die every day without record or eulogy.

WHAT flowers early decays early.

BORROWING a thing is not as good as owning it,—reading is not as good as thinking.

INSPIRATION begins but will consummates.

THE soul rides a lazy and insensible beast, and only the spur and bridle keep it out of the mire;—sleep not!

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THE poet sits in the confessional of the heart; and true poetry is only feeling sublimed into thoughts which, out of their own richness and sweetness, come decked in the raiment of music.

IN dissection we must come to the bones, if we go far enough; in philosophy, to a dreary sense of desolation and nothingness, if we go far enough.

KILL the bawd,—bury the brothel.

THE pleasures be poisons all, though sugar-coated,—good drugs which cure in drops but kill in drams.

WHY is it that Christians attach so much importance to death-bed repentance, and pious, contrite utterances at the last moment, repudiating all of life and belief gone before? Sickness, suffering and fear obfuscate the best understanding, and it is not then, surely, that we see clearly, as the preachers would have us believe, but rather during our intrepid hours of vigorous life, when we have leisure and tranquillity. As a testimony to the truth such evidence is utterly fallacious and worthless.

WHEN should old age be respected?—When it so lives as to deserve it;—and then it need not exact, —it is unhesitatingly accorded that respect and reverence which a long life and an ample store of human experiences entitle it to.

But ah! to how many old people can you truthfully say,—You have had a long opportunity to

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learn—you have not learned; you have had a long opportunity to become good—you are not good; you have had a long opportunity to garner wisdom—you are not wise! Ask them, what then do you claim for the long opportunity of your life?—Many cannot answer.

Doubly censurable he or she who, living to grow old, is not good, wise, charitable, patient or discreet!

PAGEANTS are forms of public ostentation designed to impress the giddy multitude,—paltry feat!—or, on the other hand, the spontaneous ebullition of colossal vanity and vainglory, combined necessarily with adequate means to parade it. Roman triumphs prepared the way for tyranny, fostering the ungodly lust for power and regal splendor, its satiation passing the bounds of private extravagance; resulting finally in a subversion of the liberties of the poor fools who, applauding in sympathetic patriotism successful generals returning home laden with spoils and captives, soon themselves fell victims to a kind of anthropophagous campaign. For he certainly devours his own kind who deprives them of their liberties, without which men cease to be human; indeed, an age reft of the institutions of freedom at best serves only as excrement to the shallow periphery on which we walk, fertilizing it for better generations.

In a republic all military pageants are dangerous, and half the civic parades and processions mischievous in their ultimate effects. Soldiers, like

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harlots and newspapers, are necessary evils, but should be kept decorously in the background:—he who shouts for armies beckons to the eager specter of despotism. Civic pageants teem with blind enthusiasm, the object of the celebration being, as a general thing, either ridiculous or not adequately understood; and, temporarily oblivious of the ego in a burst of public sympathy,—a happy effect—the worthy citizen too often ends by completely submerging his identity in a dramshop. Thus extravagance opens the door to drunkenness, while licentiousness stalks without.

HALF of our intellectual luminaries—*soi disant!*—remind me of a night-lamp,—a little thing giving just light enough to see that you are in the dark.

O BEAUTY! thy bright eye in anger flashing,—
Rolling tempestuous 'neath black brows—expresses
More than the thunderbolts of words fast-crashing,
Which volley from thy lips; proud man confesses
That war—at least with thee—"is h—ll" indeed,
And wisely shuns the storm, as he had need.
Lord, Lord! I love the sight when woman rages,—
Provided 'tis not me the shrew engages—
Anger convulses, passion's waves engulf her,—
Man, vulgar man! exhales too soon—in sulphur.

FIND an husbandman, if you can, who stores away his grain ere he winnows it:—yet will a man accept opinions read in books without thinking.

YOUTH, regard each temptation as an antagonist

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with whom thou art to grapple, as in the games,
to fling or be flung.

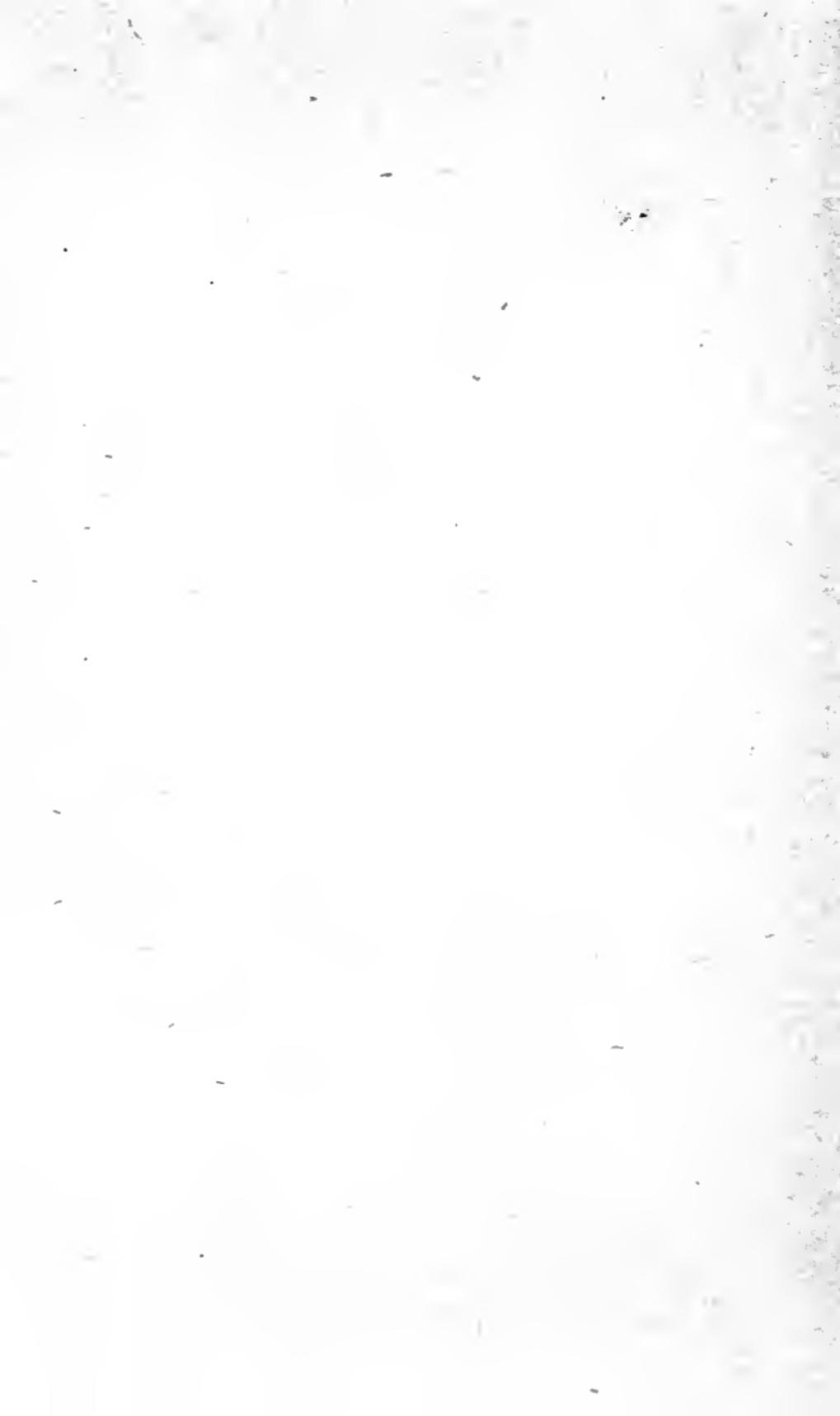
HIGH of birth,—a life of dearth.

DOUBT thine ability and thou hast none.

WOMAN and fool, dove and dove, chough and
chough—these things flock.

THE fool has the good things of the earth—and
shall he meddle with the great? Hunt him from
the high places!—mercy to fools is perfidy to
wisdom.

THE END.



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